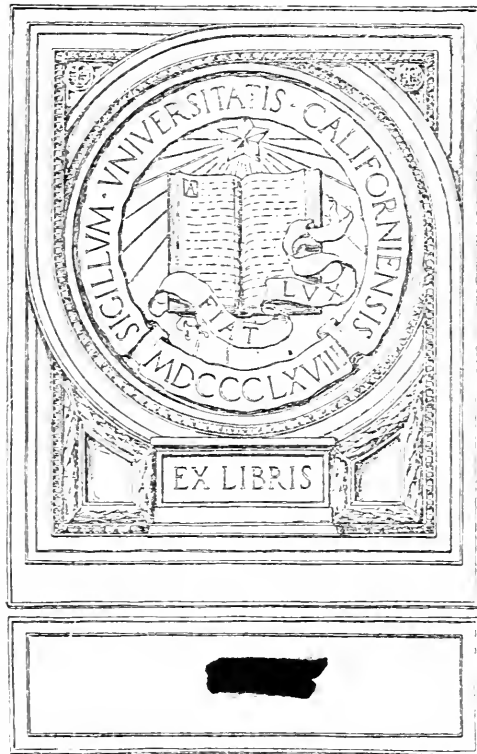


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VOLTAIRE ON THE ENGLISH STAGE

BY

HAROLD LAWTON BRUCE

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TO THE LEGISLATURE

CONTENTS

	PAGES
1. Voltaire on the English Stage, by Harold Lawton Bruce.	1-152
2. Du Transcendantalisme considéré sous son Aspect Social, par William Girard	153-226
3. The Use of Tu and Vous in Molière, by Percival B. Fay.....	227-286
4. Étude Morphologique et Syntaxique des Verbes dans Maistre Pierre Pathelin, par George Z. Patrick	287-379



UNIT OF
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VOLTAIRE ON THE ENGLISH STAGE

BY

HAROLD LAWTON BRUCE

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. The author, the adapters, and the situation	2
II. Duncombe's <i>Brutus</i> , the first English adaptation from Voltaire..	11
III. Hill and Voltaire	23
IV. <i>Mahomet the Impostor</i>	57
V. Murphy and Voltaire	69
VI. Francklin's adaptations from Voltaire	93
VII. Colman's <i>English Merchant</i> and Macklin's <i>Man of the World</i>	105
VIII. The last adaptations	117
IX. The author's fate at the hands of the adapters	131
Appendix	140
Bibliographies	146

PREFACE

This study is the revision of a thesis of the same title submitted in 1915 to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. My thanks are due to various members of the English Department of Yale University for friendly encouragement, and to the authorities of the Yale University Library for privileges promptly and courteously accorded. To Professor George H. Nettleton in particular I wish to express my appreciation of unflinching and generous aid, from the first suggestion to the completion of the work.

H. L. B.

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, October 1, 1917.

CHAPTER I

THE AUTHOR, THE ADAPTERS, AND THE SITUATION

The eighteenth century world was interested in Voltaire. The checkered thread of his experiences was spun in the Netherlands, England, Germany, Switzerland, and across all France. His works related him to the men of letters of those countries and of much of Europe outside them. Editions, often in the original French, bore the names of Paris, Vienna, London, Rome, The Hague, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Strasburg, Dresden, Geneva, and a dozen provincial cities of France. If the controversies that waged about his religious and historical books be set aside, if it be forgotten that he was the protector of the injured, the veritable builder of a community, the guest of a king, there still remains the interest in his dramatic works which made the Parisians gather in a throng that filled the streets and pressed against the doors of the crowded theatre where one of his plays was receiving its first presentation, anxious to hear echoes of the applause, and to catch first reports between the acts of the events on the stage. Even in the mimic world his words had eager ears: in the world of reality they moved the kings and thinkers of Europe.

Eighteenth century England was interested in Voltaire. An exile, touched with the glamor of sacrifice for a cause, he had spent three years in that country. Returned to France, his fame and power spreading, he had become the picturesque center of news that came to London from across the Channel. The magazines carried reports of his latest plays and smug refutations of his religious heresies. The English struggled between admiration of the brilliant man of letters and horror at the daring phrases of the author of the *Philosophical Dictionary*. They printed translations and editions in the French of his works; they bowed to his early gallantries; they were stung by his later

diatribes. But, from the day in 1726 that he came to London an exile, to that day in 1778 when they heard how his bust was crowned with garlands and roses at the Théâtre Français, he was never entirely out of their minds.

The opportunity was obvious. His controversial works could only be reprinted and discussed in England; his dramatic works could be re-presented. English dramatists saw and seized the opportunity, and for nearly a hundred years adaptations of his plays were on the boards of London theatres.¹ Twelve writers had a hand in these adaptations. William Duncombe (1690-1769) prepared a version of *Brutus*; Aaron Hill (1685-1750) adapted *Zaïre*, *Alzire*, *Mérope*, and *La Mort de César*; James Miller (1706-1774), John Hoadly (1711-1776), and later David Garrick (1717-1779) had various parts in altering *Le Fanatisme*; Arthur Murphy (1727-1805) brought out a version of *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, and plays that showed the influence of *L'Indiscret*, *Oreste*, and *Alzire*; George Colman the elder (1732-1794) rendered *L'Écossaise* for Londoners; Thomas Francklin (1721-

¹ Of these adaptations little in detail is known. Old histories of the stage, like Dibdin's or Victor's, give scattered hints of their fate; magazines of the time hide the facts in obscure corners. Recent books, like Professor Lounsbury's *Shakespeare and Voltaire* (New York, 1902), or Miss Brewster's *Aaron Hill* (New York, 1913), are prevented by their purpose from more than glancing at the subject. Current library catalogues and current histories of literature reflect the obscurity of the past and the indifference of the present. The British Museum alone has a coherent list of the adaptations, and its compilation is neither exhaustive nor single in purpose. Literary historians, though they have studied the influence on the English theatre in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of Corneille, Molière, and Racine (Dorothea Frances Canfield, *Corneille and Racine in England*, New York, 1904; Dudley Howe Miles, *The Influence of Molière on Restoration Comedy*, New York, 1909), have not fixed Voltaire's place in English dramatic history with definiteness. Only two connected accounts of his dramas on the English stage have appeared, one by Genest (*Some Account of the English Stage*, Bath, 1832, vi, 171-175), and one by Professor Nettleton (*English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1914, pp. 198ff., 235ff.; *Cambridge History of English Literature*, x, 90ff., 96ff., 493ff.). Genest's article is little more than a record of the plays included in a 1780-1781 translation of Voltaire (by Williams, Downman, Campbell, Parry, and Johnson, published by Fielding and Walker in London), and Professor Nettleton, dealing with the whole history of the period, necessarily contracts his treatment of Voltaire to the scale that fits a single phase of the subject. Thus whatever there may be in the adaptations that is characteristic of the French or English stage, whatever traces of their transplanting from Paris to London may be seen in their new form, whatever facts of their fate in England may be gleaned from old records, is a story still substantially untold.

1784) made versions of *Oreste* and of *Le Duc de Foix*; Charles Macklin (1697?–1797) borrowed from *Nanine*; and Dorothea Celesia (1738–1790), Joseph Cradock (1742–1826), and George Ayscough (d. 1779), were adapters respectively of *Tancrède*, *Les Scythes*, and *Sémiramis*.

A glance at this group reveals at once how broad was Voltaire's appeal to potential adapters, and how uneven the fitness of those who answered it. The possibility of interesting English audiences in his plays caught the attention not only of professional playwrights and men of letters in England, but also of non-professional writers. Hill, Murphy, Garrick, Colman the elder, and Macklin were familiar figures in the theatrical circles of London, and their presence among the adapters of the greatest of contemporary French playwrights is not surprising. Moreover, Duncombe and Francklin were miscellaneous writers, and Cradock's chief interest was in literature, so that their work too, if it did not center about the theatre, was at least not foreign to its appeal. But Miller, though he was something of a playwright, was dependent on the church for his living; Hoadly too was a clergyman; Madame Celesia sent up her version of *Tancrède* from her Genoese villa, and Ayscough, when he was not traveling, held a commission in the Guards. A strange group, this, to bring Voltaire before English audiences; a group as motley in ability as in vocation; its members almost without relationship one with another, from the retiring Duncombe of the early century, through Murphy and Garrick, the active quarrelsome Irishmen, caught in London's midcentury whirl of pride and prejudice, down to the affected Captain of the Guards, George Ayscough, and the pathetic figure of the senile Macklin, in the century's last quarter.

Garrick's is the only name in this group that carries any suggestion of ability of the first rank—and his share in the adaptations was supervisory. He advised others who had undertaken them—he revised—but the first impulse did not come from him. His broad dramatic interest connected him with Voltaire; his critical authority pronounced judgment on versions of the

Frenchman's work, but there their literary relations ended. After Garrick there were several adapters who in their time held no mean place in the estimation of their contemporaries—though even their memory is now largely darkened by the shadow of neglect that has fallen across eighteenth century drama. Arthur Murphy, for instance, was said to have an extent of dramatic talents very rarely concentrated in one writer,² and Aaron Hill secured a wide hearing from those who lived in the same years with him—his projects, his dramatic theories and practices, his pretensions to poetic authority and power, found many ears. "In his own day," says Professor Lounsbury,³ "he had no small repute . . . with many of his contemporaries he had the reputation of being a man of ability, and with some of being a man of genius." Further, Colman the elder and Charles Macklin both had long and intimate connection with the stage. The former was manager, at one time of Covent Garden, at another of the Haymarket; held "the esteem and affection of the best men of his day,"⁴ and was, by Byron, favorably compared with Sheridan. Macklin quarreled with everyone, Garrick, Sheridan, the public, and yet so endeared himself that in old age he was applauded when his memory failed him and he stood speechless on the stage; while in his dotage a place was assigned to him in the theatre, where his entrance was a nightly event.

But here ends the number of those among the adapters of Voltaire whose lot was not most circumscribed. Thomas Francklin lives but precariously in library catalogues through his translations, and in annals of the theatre through a handful of plays; Joseph Cradock, though in his day known to wits, is now well-nigh forgotten. William Duncombe, James Miller, John Hoadly, Madame Celesia, and George Ayseough touched here and there the theatrical literature of the eighteenth century, and all came in for transitory attention by virtue of their borrowings from Voltaire, but all have now relapsed into obscurity.

² Dibdin, *History of the Stage*, v, 152ff.

³ *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, p. 83.

⁴ Joseph Knight, article on Colman, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Thus the group of Voltaire's adapters was mixed, ranging from the bright figure of Garrick to the dim mediocrities of Francklin, Cradock, and Ayscough. It follows that the adaptations were by hands that, in the aggregate, were not so familiar with the technique of the theatre as was Voltaire. He, of course, was an astute, critical, and practical writer for the actual stage. He kept his ear to the ground for every vibration of public opinion; he withdrew, rewrote, and reworded his plays as that opinion dictated. To him a play composed was but half finished. He had his own theatre at Ferney, and his close relations with the Théâtre Français and with the actors and actresses there, to make him, not a theoretical composer of literary plays, but a dramatist uniting with literary training a wide and practical experience of the actors, writers and stages of his time. Some of those who adapted his works for the English had the same type of practical preparation. Hill, Murphy, Colman the elder, Garrick, and Macklin were by profession men of the theatre and had that understanding of the requirements of the stage and of audiences that only actual experience gives. The others, Duncombe, Miller, Hoadly, Madame Celesia, Francklin, Cradock and Ayscough, had little more than an academic interest in the theatre. In short, Voltaire's adapters were largely theoretical rather than practical dramatists.

Furthermore, they acknowledged no authority. They did not set out to render, but to improve Voltaire. There is something ridiculous in these shadowy men talking seriously about "amending" the work of the great Frenchman. Yet all, with the exception perhaps of Doctor Francklin and Madame Celesia, set boldly out, with no quiet intention of literary translation, but with announced purpose of poetic adaptation.

But there is a point more important. No matter how cosmopolitan or eminent may have been Voltaire's position; no matter how uneven or mediocre in ability may have been his adapters, the Channel was between him and them. Behind him was French literature, behind them was English literature. Though he had been touched with English freedom by his stay

in England and by his study of the language, and though they had been in contact with French classicism by their knowledge of the language, if by no more significant connection, national lines had not been blotted out. It was not as though Voltaire for one instant catered to English taste; nor as though an expatriated English man with an enthusiasm for the Gallie drama came to his former countrymen as an apostle or advocate of a new master. Their purposes were entirely different. Voltaire never dreamed of writing primarily for the English; his adapters never purposed first of all to spread the knowledge of him or to give his works a wider influence. Not he, but the adapters themselves, were to be the beneficiaries of their efforts. They aimed at hitting the mark of English taste, of gaining reputation and profit for themselves through their knowledge of him. More than once they did not take the trouble to mention the source of their material, but were ready to take all credit to themselves. The study of their work in altering him will definitely be a study of the passing of Gallie material through an English medium.

This process may perhaps be better placed in its relation to literary history after a glance at the conditions of the drama in France and England during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. The traditions from the past and the reigning influences of the present in that century were bound to influence the transfer of Voltaire to the English theatre.

The heritage of the past that descended to the French eighteenth century stage, was a heritage of two centuries of dramatic activity, two centuries that had formed an ascending series in success and power, and had but just witnessed the highest point of that series. Beginning in the sixteenth century at the time of Alexandre Hardy and *Le Cid*, the serious drama had slowly risen to a culmination in the tragedies of the Corneilles (Pierre, 1606-1684; Thomas, 1625-1709) and of Racine (1639-1699). Almost from its birth it had felt the domination of the three unities as inescapable rules of taste and propriety. Looked on not too reverently, but rather as instruments of probability, they had

wielded power always, sometimes warping and mis-shaping, but more often giving form and certain pattern to the fabric of the drama's action. The masters, Pierre Corneille and Racine, did not escape their sway, but the genius of these two had found expression with and through the precepts of art. Yet it had not so broken through these precepts that the way was cleared for freer walking by those who came after. No school of serious dramatists was engendered by this classic period in French drama—instead tragedy all about Racine was feeble, and after him decadent, attenuated, cold with the rigor of conventionality.

Very different were the ancestors of the eighteenth century stage in England. There the flowering time of the drama had not been known to the last generation; its sudden and brilliant climax had been reached a century earlier, and had been followed by an interregnum in the very years when French tragedy was approaching its highest point. The interregnum over, there had come a few decades of new activity, when Dryden, Lee and Otway, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar held the stage.

Just as the life history of the English drama was less regular than that of the French, so its submission to the supremacy of the rules of the classic past was less absolute. Those rules had been early grafted on the new growth in England as in France—in Shakespeare's own time Jonson had stood stoutly for them. But in England there was a great pathbreaker and pioneer in Shakespeare with his native energy. The giant of life stirred; the threads of criticism and conventionality snapped: the way was open for freer walking. The life impulse though was gone, and his successors did sorry work, with their tragedies of blood and revenge, their heroic drama, that hothouse plant of forced growth and hectic bloom, and their plays of false and sickly sentiment. In the last half of the seventeenth century Lee and Otway must stand as the best of the legitimate serious dramatists in England, and by that choice must be opposed to such names as Corneille and Racine in France—a comparison that can give no pleasure to English literary pride. Molière (1622-1673), a contemporary of Racine and Corneille, surpassed any English play-

wright of the period in comedy, so that in that field, as in tragedy, the seventeenth century displayed English drama with a freer past and a weaker present than its French counterpart.

But tragedy in France, says Lanson,⁵ was very sick from the day that it lost Racine. The next century tried to bring it back to life, but the remedy ended in killing it. The form persisted but the spirit had flown. The serious drama was a literary exercise according to fixed formulas, not an art. Crébillon, to be sure, roused interest by the horrible and fantastic material that he squeezed into the established molds, but it was a morbid, more than a legitimate interest. Voltaire alone understood tragedy and gave it vitality. "He," says Lanson,⁶ "is all there is to French tragedy in the eighteenth century. Outside of him there is nothing to catch attention. It contains Lanoue and Lemierre and La Harpe, and De Belloy and Saurin, and Chénier—but all, together, are far from being equivalent to him."

There was no living dramatist in England to challenge comparison with Voltaire. No one in England understood tragedy and gave it vitality, as he did in France. Of the English tragic writers, Rowe, Lillo, Moore, Whitehead, Home, Mason, none is much superior to the level of that list of their French contemporaries which Lanson dismisses so curtly and justly. Looked at in the large it was a barren time. Critics have turned back to the Elizabethans for Voltaire's match. Professor Lounsbury's book, *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, is in itself an evidence of that rivalry. Professor Nettleton, in summing up Voltaire's influence,⁷ names the Elizabethan as the victor in the contention for English esteem and favor.⁸

Thus the French, though at the beginning of the eighteenth

⁵ *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 637.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 644.

⁷ *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, p. 201.

⁸ As a parallel to this comparison of Shakespeare and Voltaire in London, it is interesting to notice that across the Channel, a little later, the same process went on, and the adaptations of Shakespeare made by Ducis—*Hamlet*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Le Roi Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Jean Sans Terre*, and *Othello*—are ranked as more important to French tragedy than the works of Voltaire's contemporaries (Lanson, *op. cit.*, p. 644).

century they were nearer to great days in the drama than the English, during the century, with the exception of Voltaire, were almost as far from approaching the elevation of the past. Hence Voltaire had all the advantage of position, overtopping his contemporaries in France, he overtopped any possible rivals in England. As American literary drama today turns to Galsworthy or Maeterlinck or Rostand, so English drama of his time turned to Voltaire.

CHAPTER II

DUNCOMBE'S *BRUTUS*, THE FIRST ENGLISH ADAPTATION FROM VOLTAIRE

During his three year exile in England, Voltaire was much at Wandsworth, in the company of Everard Falkener, an English merchant, and of French refugees making their headquarters there. In this setting he wrote in English prose the first act of *Brutus*, and by the time he returned to France, late in 1728 or early in 1729,¹ he had completed a sketch of the whole play. It is not too much to imagine that his experiences in England, his first view of what to him were free institutions, had suggested to him this tragedy of sacrifice for ideals of freedom, of utter detestation of royalty. By December of 1729 he had completed the play in French; in that month he invited the actors of the Comédie Française to dinner, read the play to them, procured its acceptance and rehearsal, and then suddenly withdrew it. Though he alleged² that a plot had been formed by Crébillon and Rohan to ruin *Brutus* at its first performance, it is more probable that he himself had come to realize the faults of his work and to fear for its future. In any case he revised and rewrote it, and a year later, on December 11, 1730, presented it. After fifteen performances, it lapsed into obscurity until the Revolution, when new times and more sympathetic ideas gave it a vivid appeal and a longer lease of life.

Though there was nothing in the early history of the play in France to commend it to English attention, its conception at Wandsworth, and the comparison, in its dedication, of the French and English stages, brought it to notice across the Channel. William Duncombe, a retired navy clerk who had devoted himself to literature, undertook a revision of it for the London stage. The

¹ Foulet, *Correspondance de Voltaire*, pp. viii-x.

² *Oeuvres de Voltaire*, Garnier Frères, II, 301.

first French edition had appeared in 1731;³ in the following year Duncombe's version was submitted to the theatrical managers. The triumvirate, Booth, Cibber, and Wilks, accepted it, but postponed its production until November, 1734. At Drury Lane on the twenty-fifth of that month, they brought it out with a cast which, save for the omission of Quin, gave a favorable representation of the strength of the Drury Lane company. The play was acted eight or nine times; was given February 24, 1735, for Duncombe's benefit, and then disappeared from the boards. It was printed by J. Roberts in February, 1735; went through a second edition in that year, and was reprinted in 1747. There its career ended.

The time of its production contributed, perhaps, to the shortness of the run of *Brutus* at Drury Lane. It was performed "when the town was empty, the parliament not sitting, and Farinelli in full song and feather at the Haymarket."⁴ "The quavering Italian Eunuch," Duncombe is reported to have said, "proved too powerful for the rigid Roman consul."

However, a rival of Duncombe's, Aaron Hill, was less tolerant in his explanation of the play's fate. "The first piece brought on this season," he wrote in *The Prompter* in February, 1735:⁵

was the Tragedy of *Brutus* . . . which was no more than a translation from M. de Voltaire, who not only took the Hint from, but coldly imitated the finest scenes of Lee's *Brutus*. The ill Success that this Play met with, gave me as much Satisfaction, as I had conceived Indignation against the poet for translating a Frenchman's Plagiarism, and to bring it on a Stage which our own Brutus might have trod once more, with true Roman Dignity.

Hill had reasons of his own for not wishing another man's version of Voltaire to succeed. A year and a half earlier⁶ he had completed and was seeking to bring on the London stage an adaptation of that author's *Zaïre*. That this French play was

³ *Le Brutus de Monsieur de Voltaire*. Avec un discours sur la tragédie. Paris, 1731.

⁴ Francis Watt, Article on Duncombe, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁵ Number 24.

⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine*, III, 174.

much more a "Plagiarism," than *Brutus*,⁷ made Hill's indignation at Duncombe smack of unrighteousness. Other aspects of his criticism were as unjust. Duncombe's version of *Brutus* was more than a translation of Voltaire. Furthermore, it was not such an "ill-success," that Hill could afford to exult. It had more than half as many performances as the original in Paris, its run of eight nights did not in those days mean failure. It obtained applause, and the tribute of tears. "There was scarcely a dry eye in the boxes during the last scene between Brutus and Titus."⁸

After all,⁹ it was not the competition of the Italian singer, nor indignation at alleged plagiarism by Voltaire, that settled the fate of the play, but its own qualities. More significant than any external circumstances were Duncombe's taste and training, and the variations from his model by which he sought to make his version "more agreeable to the English taste."¹⁰

Duncombe's preliminary remarks to the 1734 edition of *Junius Brutus* reveal something of his dramatic beliefs. Voltaire had written to Bolingbroke,¹¹ expressing his surprise that no Englishman had treated a subject so suitable to the English stage as that of *Brutus*. Duncombe, in the preface, at once set him right, saying that he

. . . was misinform'd in this Particular; for Mr. Lee writ a Tragedy on the same Subject in the Reign of King Charles the Second, entitled, *Lucius Junius Brutus, rather of his Country*; which, after it had been thrice acted, was forbid by the Lord Chamberlain Arlington as an Anti-monarchical Play . . . it cou'd not, I believe, have succeeded; for, besides its being full of Rants . . . the Character of Brutus is there so

⁷ Indeed, as Professor Lounsbury has pointed out (*Shakespeare and Voltaire*, pp. 75ff.), Voltaire cannot soundly be charged with plagiarism from Lee's *Brutus*.

⁸ Francis Watt, article on Duncombe, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁹ Criticism of Duncombe's play has been very meager. Dibdin mentioned it as if it were an original work. "Duncombe translated Racine's *Athalie* and wrote *Junius Brutus*," he said (*History of the Stage*, v, 55). Genest (III, 439ff.) in his usual meticulous manner, found one or two "highly improper" anachronisms. He considered the adaptation as a whole "cold and uninteresting."

¹⁰ Preface, 1734 edition of *Junius Brutus*.

¹¹ *Oeuvres*, II, 311.

shockingly Severe, without any Softnings of Tenderness and Humanity, that . . . it can scarce seem natural to a discerning Audience, much less agreeable to a polite one.¹²

This evidence that Duncombe had a taste for restraint is re-enforced by his admiration of classic subjects and treatment.¹³ He lamented the madness of a public that neglected the sublimity of Dryden's *Oedipus* for the rant and fustian of Lee. He resented the parsimony of the managers, by which he had been forced to suppress the "choruses after the manner of the ancients" that he had prepared for his tragedy. It seems that this navy clerk, who had been able to resign at thirty-five, and to retire in easy circumstances, was more than a clerk in mind. He had a taste and training that made him sympathize with the austerity of Voltaire's conception of Brutus, and prefer the repose of the latter's careful style to the looser fury of Lee.

He was as honest in acknowledging obligations as he was quiet in his taste. In the prologue he wrote:

A foreign Bard these Scenes in Britain plann'd.
Britain, dear Liberty! thy darling Land.
The Genius of our Isle here shines confest,
Which warm'd with British Fire a Gallie Breast!

In the preface he repeated: "this Play is form'd on the Model of Mr. de Voltaire's excellent Tragedy, entitled *Brutus*." Finally, he was so scrupulous as to state that two lines in the fifth act were borrowed from Lee's *Lucius Junius Brutus*. Candor that acknowledges such a debt does not deserve to go unnoticed in a world of plagiarists.

Any pretense to originality or literary creation would have been hopeless and unsupported. It is no surprise to find that the English play belongs on a distinctly lower literary level than the French. No ordinary adapter could be expected to ap-

¹² Naturally enough, Hill's estimate of Lee's play was at variance with Duncombe's. "I never dip into Lee's tragedy," he said (*Gentleman's Magazine*, v. 88, February, 1735), "but I think myself walking in old Rome, such true Roman Majesty appears thro' the whole play."

¹³ He was himself a translator of portions of Horace, and of Racine's *Athalie*.

proach the polish of Voltaire, an adept in "elegance, harmony and charm of verse."¹⁴ The drop was abrupt. Distinction gave way to indistinction, force to weakness. At its best Duncombe's style was flat, his figures conventional, and his passion labored:

Deaf as the Winds, or raging Seas, to Pity,

or,

I hasten to the Land of dark Oblivion
Where racking Thought shall torture me no more,

or,

Nor Pain, nor Grief, our virtuous Souls shall know,
But with Love's purest Flames for ever glow.
Thy Fate, dear lovely Youth, with Joy I'll share,
And thus escape from ev'ry racking Care.

were as high as he could wring it.

As was to be the case with all the adapters, he was faced by the necessity of a change from the prevailing verse-form of French tragedy to that of English tragedy, from Alexandrines to blank verse. This shifting from a fixed mold, with rhyme and rigid laws of structure, to a freer type, in which the thought did not have to be shackled in rhyme, nor subjected to formal rule, might have given him release from some of the vexations of verse translation. Indeed his verse turned out to be free and facile, not cramped, hidebound, or slavish; but the result was sacrifice of the smoothness of Voltaire's rhymed couplets, with no access of energy or vigor.

Duncombe's dramatic instinct had been sufficiently trained in English stage conventions to be offended by the lengthy passages of recitation in Voltaire's play. To the Frenchman there was nothing unnatural or inartistic in delaying his action or interrupting his dialogue with studied declamation. He lavished his best efforts on recitals that reached a length of forty or fifty lines. He elaborated such passages with all the beauties of poetry and of rhetoric of which he was master. They became units in themselves, rounded, complete, almost divorced from the action. Such speeches Duncombe again and again broke down into

¹⁴ *Oeuvres*, II, 322.

dramatic form. There was not an act in the English play in which some long-winded recital in the French did not become a dialogue.

But even while Duncombe's translation plodded steadily along, content to follow the original except in the length of its speeches, now and then it did gross injury to the delicacy and modulation of the French. In the closing lines of scenes and acts came Duncombe's greatest changes and his greatest blunders. Voltaire was accustomed to place at these emphatic points lines which brought to a focus the tendencies of the preceding action. Duncombe smothered these sharp and specific phrases under a cloud of figure or generalization. Thus the direction and import of the first act were forgotten in the figure with which he ended it:

Awhile the Lordly Lion scours the Plains,
Mocks at the Spear, and terrifies the Swains;
At length, entangled in the Hunter's Toils,
With Fury roars, and drops th' untasted Spoils.

Equally metaphorical and cold, due to the adapter's efforts, was the conclusion of the fourth act. There Brutus said:

The Eagle thus trains up her generous Brood,
Provokes to Toils, and spirits them with Blood,
Till borne on Wings full-grown, and bold to rise,
The Bird of Jove to Heav'n impetuous flies:
By her fierce Talons his red Thunder hurl'd,
To punish, and reform a guilty World.

Finally, the last scene of the play was tagged with as namby-pamby an epitaph as ever was set over an heroic action:

Reason's just Laws with jealous Care obey,
And never from the Paths of Virtue stray.
It will be vain, illustrious Deeds to boast,
When by One Crime, the Fame of All is lost.

The concluding phrases, with which Voltaire enforced the significance of his scenes, sprang from the action and were in terms of it; while Duncombe's figures were detached and weak, his generalizations pale and humdrum. Matthew Arnold would

have seen in him more of the German than of the Celt or of the Norman.

Duncombe, true to his promise in the preface, made "considerable alterations and additions, especially in the Fifth Act." When he walked paths that Voltaire had not made smooth for him, he was none too sure of his way. The farther he strayed from the French, the weaker his language became. Out of his search for loftiness grew vagueness and tautology. Let Duncombe accept and translate Voltaire's phrase or thought, and his touch was not inept; but let him seek new words or new ideas, and it grew heavy and unpoetic.

Further, he departed from the French more in tense than in quiet scenes. It is characteristic of Voltaire's tragedies to subordinate long scenes of unimpassioned preparation to a few major passages in which all the possibilities of the preceding action are set free, and the clash of wills is energetically depicted. The tension of such scenes (the last in the third act is an example), touched Duncombe, and moved him to some remolding of his material. But his remolding did not usually follow a coherent plan, rather it contented itself with looser paraphrase, with a freer and a weaker adaptation of the French.

There are in the English *Brutus* more fundamental changes from the French than those of style and manner, changes that affect the characters and the action of the whole. Duncombe had condemned Lee's earlier play¹⁵ because the character of Brutus was there "so shockingly Severe, without any Softnings of Tenderness and Humanity." The same harshness he felt in Voltaire, in Lucia and Titus, and more particularly in Brutus. These three, Brutus, Titus his son, and Lucia, daughter of Tarquin, the greatest enemy of Brutus and of Roman freedom, formed the central group of the play, and a change in their characters meant a change in its essential effect. All three Duncombe definitely sought to soften, to make more tender and human. When, in Act iv, Lucia upbraided Titus because he would not, for love of her, abandon Rome to his father's enemies, in the

¹⁵ See p. 14.

French she seemed rather peevish and nearsighted, with little feeling for Titus, caught in the toils of love and honor. Duncombe at once made her resentment more reasonable; her sympathy more real. In his version she said less of Titus' ingratitude, more of his difficulties. She no longer cried:

"Pour qui? pour un ingrat, qui rougit de m'aimer."

but, after being asked,

*"Do not you tremble for the Life of Tarquin,
And can you blame his Filial Love of Brutus?
Judge of his Pains by what you feel yourself."*

she said:

*" 'Tis hard indeed, . . . I pity him!
Heav'n knows how deeply his Distress affects me,
I'm almost overwhelmed."*

Commonplace as these additions were, they showed that Duncombe sought to make Lucia more thoughtful and thereby more appealing. Likewise Titus' farewell to her, which in Voltaire was somewhat ironic, became in Duncombe more emotional.

*Forget thee, O! enchanting Excellence!
The Sun shall sooner cease his Daily Course,
Than I can tear thy Image from my Breast.*

But it was in the rôle of Brutus that Duncombe made his most significant contributions. Their motive may be read in an addition to Brutus' part in Act v, in soliloquy:

*Remov'd from Public View, I may discard
The awful Rigour of a Roman Consul,
And with Paternal Pity mourn my Sons.*

*O Titus! Titus! would the Gods permit me
To offer up my Life to ransom thine,
For Thee, my Son, I would contented die!
But Honour, Virtue, Rome, all, all forbid it!
O Rome! thou little know'st what Pangs I feel,
To fix thy Rights, and make thee free and glorious!*

Very different were these pangs from the rigid coldness of the Roman consul in the French.

Throughout the closing scenes of the play, the thin reserved action of the original would strike coldly on the English. There was a lack of humanity, of ordinary sentiment in it; Lucía was dismissed in four lines and a half; Brutus prepared for his supreme sacrifice of son to country in a moment or two—all was covered; the inner struggle and suffering found slight outward expression. Hence it was entirely natural, considering the traditions and habits of English drama, that this outward expression should be more complete in the English, that emotion should be given a tongue, that romantic freedom should take the place to some extent of classic repression. Of Brutus it was now said that he:

Was bound by his high Office to condemn
A Crime, the Father's bleeding Heart forgives.

and he himself exclaimed to Titus:

How dear thou art to this afflicted Breast,
And how reluctantly I tear thee from it!

Farewell, thou much-belov'd ill-fated Youth!
Tho' thou art snatch'd untimely from the Earth,
My Misery is heavier far than thine;
For all thy Pangs will in a Moment pass,
But I am doom'd to bear a ling'ring Death;
And to the Urn my hoary Head descends,
Bow'd down with Grief, and never-ceasing Woes!
How hard the Task, when partial Nature pleads,
To yield the Father's, to the Patriot's Claim!

"Tender is the North," and Brutus' Roman heart must be softer, more bleeding, more torn than it was pictured by its French interpreter.

When Proculus, in the original, came with the sympathy of the senators for Brutus, he was greeted with the harsh, almost blatant answer:

"Vous connaissez Brutus, et l'osez consoler!"

but Duncombe made him answer simply:

I stand indebted to their Love,

and pass on to his heroic readiness still to fight in Rome's defense. In the English version Brutus the father, not Brutus the Roman consul, was envisaged at the last moments. He did not say that his heart knew only Rome, as he did in Voltaire—even as he girded himself, his mind was full of the thought of Titus:

. . . that Heroe . . .

Who, to preserve their Rights, was doom'd to die,

While green in Youth, and deck'd with blooming Honours,

and his last thought was for that same "poor, deluded Titus," and not, as it was in Voltaire, for "la Patrie."

Along with this change in the characterization of the central group of the play, Duncombe altered its events at the critical moments of the last act. There four deaths occurred, not one of which was seen by the audience. Brutus announced that Messala had taken his own life; Valerius narrated the suicide of Tiberius, and that of Lucia, and Proculus brought the tidings of the death of Titus. That the wings should hide such a shambles, without the spilling of a drop of blood on the stage, was an established classic convention. But to such nicety the English were not accustomed. Duncombe, Englishman that he was, substituted for the brief and chilly recital of Lucia's suicide two scenes entirely of his own invention. Lucia, with disheveled hair, fell on her knees before Brutus and begged the life of Titus, a petition that Brutus refused. She met Titus; they said farewell, and Lucia stabbed herself, while Titus exclaimed at the greatness of the example she had given of how a mind resolved might die. There was no dignity and poise—Lucia ran and threw herself on her knees before Brutus—Titus leaned upon her when nature was "too weak to bear the dreadful Conflict"; they embraced, and after her suicide Titus "stood awhile silent, as stupify'd with Grief."

The addition of these two scenes completely shifted the emphasis in the climactic sections of the play; Lucia and her love

replaced Brutus and his patriotism. Her death became the most striking event in the play, while Brutus' condemnation of Titus, about which there was much suspense in the original, now almost a foregone conclusion, was to trail in as an anticlimax. Perhaps Duncombe builded more wisely than he knew, for in his version there was greater unity than in Voltaire's. Titus was throughout the pivot of the action. About him, with his heroism, success, ambition, disappointment and passion for Lucia, all the other characters revolved. In Voltaire, on the other hand, there was a marked turn in the interest of the audience. In the early scenes it was directed to Titus, the victim of so many emotions, but in the later ones it shifted to Brutus and the struggle in his soul between love of son and love of country, while Lucia sank out of sight, and Titus became the passive object of Brutus' decision. From the beginning of Act II to scene 7 of Act IV, Titus stood in the center; from that time Brutus usurped his place, and Voltaire, with all his respect for unity of action, had violated its tenets and broken his plot in two.

Now if Duncombe had consciously and purposefully kept attention focused on Titus, and had realized that he was thus bettering the unity of the play, he would have found a way to suppress or condense the later action, to preserve the effect of Lucia's suicide and to escape the anticlimax of the closing scenes. But he went on as before, altering the action in many details but not fundamentally changing it, letting it drag on to an unimproved end.

Throughout the last act, the adaptation tended to linger over the catastrophe, to dwell on its pathos, to pronounce the obsequies for the fallen, while Voltaire hurried on to the close, preaching no funeral sermons. Perhaps the English were more accustomed to a grief that was slow and reverencing; the tributes of Fortinbras to Hamlet and of Antony to Brutus are familiar examples of the honors they had patience to pay their heroic dead.

Duncombe, then, in attempting to make Voltaire's *Brutus* more agreeable to English taste, departed from his original in form and matter. His style was common and prolix beside the

elevated, epigrammatic manner of the French. Blank verse replaced Alexandrines; lengthy recitals were shortened or broken into dialogue. The English version was weak at the ends of scenes, which it dulled with moralization or shadowed with figures of speech; it was weakest when it was freest from its model, and most paraphrastic and affected in scenes of high feeling. Internally, the frigidity of the major characters was warmed by the addition of passages of grief and pity;¹⁶ the action was enlivened by the direct presentation of violent deeds that were narrated in the original; the broken unity of the French was partially mended by continued attention to the character that held the center of the stage during the early acts, but the catastrophe, by that token, became an anticlimax.

The most striking, as it was the most significant, change made by Duncombe was his presentation on the stage of the death of Lucia. This alteration was in full accord with the custom of the English, who had not ordinarily submitted to the convention of a bloodless theater. With a long line of tragedies of revenge, tragedies of blood and heroic dramas to whet their taste and accustom their nerves to scenes of violence, they would not perhaps be satisfied with the declamation of what might be a pathetic event. Those who had been in at the death were not willingly relegated to the parlor where the story was told.

¹⁶ It is an interesting commentary on the character of the French drama to notice that Voltaire thought those, whom Duncombe found it necessary to make more tender, already very much humanized. He spoke (*Oeuvres*, II, 321, note) of having heeded the advice 'to temper the austerity of Brutus by paternal love . . . to give to the youthful Lucia a character of tenderness and innocence.'

CHAPTER III

HILL AND VOLTAIRE

While the memory of Voltaire's stay in England was still green, Aaron Hill, who through being "on the Scottish tour" had missed the acquaintance of the admired Frenchman,¹ began to busy himself with the preparation of Voltaire's plays for the English theatre. For this work he was schooled by his experience of the London stage. Twenty years before he had had a brief term as manager of Drury Lane; intermittently he had attempted the composition of tragedy and opera; recently he had agitated, in *The Prompter*, a reform in the conduct of actors and audience. Of his ability his contemporaries thought much; his successors little. His fame flickered out after his death and his memory has been alternately reviled and honored. He has been dismissed as "a bore of the first water,"² as a man without common sense or power of thought;³ and he has been praised by the latest and most thorough student of his life, for insight, imagination, occasional gleams of poetry, and even, at heart, a touch of the heroic.⁴

Of the importance to his life of his adaptations of Voltaire there is no question. Through them he holds securely a niche in the history of eighteenth century tragedy.⁵ Some of them returned to him the most substantial dividends in money and repute of any of his ventures; all bore witness of his alertness to the opportunity open to English dramatists of his time. Now that the famous exile of Wandsworth was back in Paris and was winning theatrical honors, only the task of translation lay between an adapter and a chance of profit. Moreover, no better agency for that uplift of the stage, which Hill had been demanding in

¹ Hill, *Works*, I, 241ff.

² Leslie Stephen, article on Aaron Hill, *Dictionary National Biography*.

³ Lounsbury, *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, pp. 83ff.

⁴ Brewster, *Aaron Hill*, pp. 275ff.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

his *Prompter*, could be found than the works of a playwright who appeared to the English an academician, an inheritor of the best traditions of the French stage.

Thus it was with happy prospects that Hill set to work on his first adaptation from Voltaire. There was hope of profit, hope of advancing the cause of dramatic reform, hope perhaps of establishing himself as the accepted interpreter of Voltaire to his countrymen. With *Zaïre* he opened his campaign. This fervid tragedy of passion, religion, and intrigue, had appeared in Paris August 13, 1732, had run for nine nights, and been revived November 12, for another run of twenty-one performances. In the next February, John Nourse published the play in London:⁶ the *Weekly Miscellany* for April printed an account of it, as "the gravest and Sublimest Tragedy produc'd in these Latter Ages," and by May, Hill had translated a part of it and was seeking a manager for his production. He found none, and for a time his version remained in manuscript, while Duncombe was stealing a march on him with the production of *Brutus* at Drury Lane. Worse than that, another translation of the tragedy by Johnson, found a printer early in 1735.⁷ So in June of that year, Hill, despairing at the delay of the managers, enlisted the aid of his nephew. The latter hired Sir Richard Steele's great music room in Villars Street, York Buildings, for an amateur performance of his uncle's play. "The reputation of the author brought some of the best company in London to this diminutive theatre."⁸ The proceeds of the performance Hill planned to devote to William Bond, an elderly and indigent friend, who took one of the major rôles. Bond threw himself into his part with too great abandon, and at a critical moment in the action fell in a dead faint, from which he did not recover.⁹ There were two more

⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine*, III, 106.

⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine*, v, 279.

⁸ Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of Garrick*, I, chap. 13.

⁹ Though the details of this first performance of *Zara* were recounted by Hill in *The Prompter* (no. 60), and by the *Monthly Review*, in the appendix to its 1759 volume (XXI, 552ff.), yet in September, 1770, the *Gentleman's Magazine* (XL, 406), questioned their authenticity. Two months later, in the November number of the magazine (XL, 513) one

performances of *Zara* in Villars Street, and the managers of Drury Lane, interested at last, brought out the play in January, 1736. In the same month J. Watts published it.¹⁰

Zara ran for fourteen nights at Drury Lane, and introduced to London audiences Mrs. Cibber, whose name was to be associated, through years of consistent triumph, with the title rôle. Of the other members of the cast, Milward "made very powerful effect,"¹¹ but Hill's nephew was severely handled by the critics,¹² and abandoned his part to a professional actor.

The career of the play was the most prosperous of any adaptation of Voltaire on the English stage. Revived on March 16, 1751, with Mrs. Cibber in her original part, it became a stock piece for many seasons. There are records of its performance in London in practically every season from 1751 to 1785, and occasionally until 1812. The rôle of Lusignan became a part of Garrick's repertoire, and the names of Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Barry, the Kembles, and other eighteenth century players of note were common in casts of the play. Hill's adaptation was presented not merely in London, but in provincial cities of America and England. It was put on at Philadelphia in 1768, 1790 and 1796, at Boston in 1775,¹³ at Edinburgh in 1778, at New York in 1780, 1781, 1788, and 1791, at Bath and Bristol in 1781, at Baltimore in 1782 and 1796, at Dublin in 1782 and 1783, and at Bath again

"C. D.," saying that he expected to have seen "the very singular catastrophe of Mr. William Bond cleared from doubt," stated that the accounts of it were founded on fact.

¹⁰ *London Magazine*, v, 52. *Gentleman's Magazine*, vi, 44.

¹¹ Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, i, 287.

¹² Davies, *Garrick*, pp. 142ff.

¹³ Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre*, (ii, 18) says: "Against the will of the people, who had stubbornly refused to permit any theatrical performances, Burgoyne's Thespians announced the play." General Burgoyne himself wrote a prologue and an epilogue. The prologue contained the lines:

"The tragic scene holds glory up to view,
And bids heroic virtue live in you;
Now say, ye Boston prudes (if prudes there are)
Is this a task unworthy of the fair?"

The task came to good issue, whether through the interest of the quartered soldiers, or of the populace, for "above £100" was taken at the door.

in 1808. That the play went through eighteen editions, and appeared in sixteen collections of the drama, from 1736 to 1850,¹⁴ was a further index of its appeal.

Voltaire had pretended, at least, that he saw no future for *Zaïre* in England. "I do not dare to imagine," he wrote in the epistle to Falkener with which he dedicated an early edition:

. . . that the English will pay the same honor to *Zaïre* that they have to *Brutus*, a translation of which has been played on the London stage. Here you have the reputation of being neither . . . zealots . . . nor men of tender hearts. You are believed to prefer an intrigue of conspirators to an intrigue of lovers. It is thought that in your theatre there is applause at the word "patriotism," and in ours at the word "love."

But these prophecies, soon contradicted by the fate of the English *Zara*, gave way to gentler phrases. Some two months after the first night in London, Voltaire wrote to Thieriot:¹⁵ "I have read the English *Zara*: it has enchanted me more than it has flattered my self-esteem. What! Englishmen tender, natural! without bombast! without similes at the ends of acts! Who is this Hill?" In a "second dedicatory epistle" to *Zaïre*, written in 1736, he was in most gracious mood. He paid tribute to Hill's style, and his achievement in breaking the English habit of closing each act with a rhymed couplet.¹⁶ "This tragedy," he wrote, "has just been embellished at London. It has been translated and played there with such success: I have been spoken of on your stage with such politeness and kindness, that I owe a public expression of my thanks to your nation."

¹⁴ See appendix.

¹⁵ *Oeuvres*, II, 549.

¹⁶ The statement that Hill was responsible for the disappearance of the rhymed couplet was challenged by Lessing (*Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, xv, 68, June 19, 1767), and his disproof of Voltaire's claim was reinforced by Professor Lounsbury (Shakespeare and Voltaire, pp. 91ff.). Lessing's conclusion is "Es sind nicht mehr als nur drei Unwahrheiten in dieser Stelle, und das ist für den Herren von Voltaire eben nicht viel," while Professor Lounsbury calls Voltaire's remarks, "one of those blunders which were sure to drop from his pen the moment he set out to make any but the most superficial comment on English literature." "In appendix 1 of L. Morel's *Thomson*, the whole matter is discussed and an attempt made to support Voltaire" (Brewster, *Aaron Hill*, p. 143, note). The details of this controversy are hardly worth reviving. Though Hill used no similes at the ends of his acts, some rhymed couplets lingered there. Voltaire's generalization was too sweeping.

Mrs. Cibber he praised, and his compliments were laid at the feet of Hill, "man of letters." When he wrote these pleasant phrases Voltaire had already seen the text of the first edition of Hill's *Zara*, and if he had glanced at Colley Cibber's prologue, he had read:

From *English* plays, *Zara's French* author fired,
Confess'd his Muse, beyond herself, inspir'd;
From rack'd *Othello's* rage he rais'd his Style;
And snatch'd the Brand that lights this Tragick Pile.

But on this indebtedness to Shakespeare his policy was a serene silence.¹⁷

Hill was at one with Voltaire in shunning any reference to the latter's debt to the Elizabethan. It was in these days¹⁸ that he was condemning Duncombe for bringing to England a Frenchman's plagiarism, and his silence, therefore, like Voltaire's, was discreet. In his Preface to the Reader, he contented himself with remarks on his desire for simplicity and realism in acting, and with a justification for a degree of freedom in adaptation.

If, in translating this excellent Tragedy, I have regarded, in some places, the Soul, and in others, the Letter of the Original, Monsieur de Voltaire . . . will indulge me that Latitude; except he shou'd, in observing some Alterations I have made, in his Names, and his Diction, forget, that their Motives are to be found in the Turn of our National Difference.

While the stage career of *Zara* was the best evidence that Hill knew something of the "Turn" of English taste, that popular verdict was in general seconded by critical opinion. The play was thought "much better,"¹⁹ for having passed his hands: it was said to be "executed in a masterly manner, and worthy the perusal of every Christian."²⁰ Genest²¹ and Dibdin²² considered

¹⁷ In fact, Voltaire borrowed from Shakespeare, "much which had given direction, if not distinction, to his own play," to use the phrase of Professor Lounsbury (*Shakespeare and Voltaire*, p. 82), who has fully analyzed Voltaire's appropriation of much of his impulse in *Zaire* from *Othello*, and of a part of it from *Lear* (*ibid.*, pp. 78ff.).

¹⁸ *The Prompter*, February, 1735; see p. 12.

¹⁹ *Monthly Review*, x, 26, January, 1754.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xxi, 552, appendix, 1759.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, III, 475.

²² *History of the Stage*, v, 46ff.

it Hill's best play. Dibdin²³ praised Hill for incorporating a little "stamina" into the French, and even wondered²⁴ if it were "not the best play upon the French theatre." He said: "Hill has gone so infinitely beyond all his other productions, that in point of the true requisites of tragedy, it is almost the most perfect also on the English stage."²⁵

Voltaire felt that in *Zaïre*, more than in any of his plays, he had cast restraint to the winds. To de La Roque he wrote:²⁶ "*Zaïre* is the first play in which I have dared abandon myself to all the sensitiveness of my heart—it is the first emotional tragedy that I have written." To Cideville he wrote:²⁷

Everyone here reproaches me because I put no love in my plays. They will have enough of it this time, I swear, and it will not be gallantry. It is my wish that there should be nothing so turkish, so christian, so loving, so tender, so furious, as that which I am now putting into verse . . . there will be loves, baptisms, deaths.

Hill's material, then, was very different from Duncombe's. The austere consul of *Brutus*, was far removed from the passion-wrung slave of *Zaïre*. Brutus, struggling between love of country and love of son, remained strong, self-controlled; but Zara, racked by love of her master, fidelity to father and brother, and devotion to country and faith, lost herself in storms of grief. Here, indeed, there was verse that was full of passionate, tender, and furious feeling; here there were loves, and baptisms, and deaths.

For his translation Hill had a style singularly strained and forced. It was jerky, full of italics, capitals, hyphens and commas. The current of its thought ran seldom through swift or powerful rapids, but often through tumultuous and broken

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46ff.

²⁵ Mr. Joseph Reed, in his preface to *Madrigal and Trulietta* (London, 1758) charged Hill with stealing the translation of *Zaïre* from Mr. Thomas Hudson, a clergyman of Northumberland, but brought forward no proof, other than that he had had "the anecdote," from Mr. Hudson's own lips.

²⁶ *Le Mercure*, p. 1828, August, 1732.

²⁷ *Oeuvres*, II, 533.

channels. When Sultan Osman turned "to Love, and Zara," she cried:

'Twas not in cruel Absence, to deprive me
Of your Imperial Image—everywhere,
You reign, triumphant: Memory supplies
Reflexion, with your Pow'r: and you, like Heaven,
Are, always present—and are, always gracious.

A story of battle became:

Rallying our fated Few, amidst the Flames,
Fearless, beneath the Crush of falling Towers,
The Conqu'rors, and the Conquer'd, Groans, and Death!
Dreadful—and, waving in his Hand, a Sword,
Red, with the Blood of Infidels—cry'd out,
This Way, ye faithful Christians! follow Me—

For the embellishment of Voltaire, Hill dealt out superlatives, alliterations, and figures of speech with lavish hand. Of the suspected heroine her lover cried:

. . . she's perfidious, ev'n beyond
Her Sex's undiscover'd Power of Seeming;
She's at the topmost Point of shameless Artifice;
An Empress, at Deceiving.

Of exile and imprisonment studied phrases spoke:

A barr'd Seraglio!—sad, unsocial Life!
Scorn'd and a Slave!
And *Syria* rivals, now, the Banks of Seine . . .

"Their Laws, their Lives, their Loves, delight not me." There were "damp Dungeons," "sacred Sepulchres," "Dungeon's Depths," "Damps and Darkness and Despair." Characters were "serenely slothful"; "wept to win"; "dissipated Doubt and Dread," and hoped to "Duty do." Further they were ever figurative. From "fair Jordan's flowery Bank," to the monarchs who,

"like the Sun,
Shine but in vain, unwarming, if unseen,"

their words were always touched with fancies, fancies perhaps now faded and forlorn, but surely poetic once, to Hill's mind.

Davies,²⁸ speaking of the French fondness for recitation and narrative in the drama, said: "long speeches which would disgust an English ear, are extremely pleasing to our light neighbours: they sit in silence and enjoy the beauty of sentiment and energy of language. . . . Hill, in *Zara* . . . should have interrupted, by an easy interposition, those long speeches which are equally tiresome to the speaker and the hearer." This was an unfair prescription, for all that there was in *Zara* to offend Davies was the merest débris of the solid sections of "energetic" language that Voltaire had built. Hill, well aware of a "Turn of the National Difference" here, had consistently broken the lengthy passages of the French and interrupted them by "easy interpositions," making an effort to lighten the heaviness, and to hasten the leisurely progress of the French.

But this effort, which meant a sharp curtailment of passages of exposition, reflection, transition and narration, was more than offset by his expansion of active and critical scenes. If details of the past were condensed, emotions of the present were heightened. Thus, when Osman came to bring *Zara* to their marriage, his greeting became a poetic panegyric of her. A single word, like "Paraissez," was warmed into:

Shine out, appear, be found, my lovely *Zara*.

A formal phrase like:

. . . *tout est prêt, et l'ardeur qui m'anime*
Ni souffre plus, madame, aucun retardement.

was embellished:

Impatient Eyes attend—The Rites expect thee:
And my devoted Heart, no longer, brooks
This Distance, from its Softner.

New figures and fancies appeared:

. . . all the Lamps
Of Nuptial Love are lighted, and burn pure,
As if they drew their Brightness from thy Blushes.

²⁸ *Life of Garrick*, I, 143.

The holy Mosque is fill'd with fragrant Fumes,
Which emulate the Sweetness of thy Breathing.
The Throne, that waits thee, seems to shine more richly,
As all its Gems, with animated Lustre
Fear'd to look dim, beneath the Eyes of *Zara*.

Two speeches became a volley of exclamations:

Zara. Oh! what a Wretch am I? O, Grief! Oh, Love!
Osman. Come—come—
Zara. Where shall I hide my Blushes?
Osman. Blushes?—here, in my Bosom, hide 'em.
Zara. My Lord?
Osman. Nay, *Zara*, give me thy Hand, and come—
Zara. Instruct me, Heaven!
What I shou'd say—Alas! I cannot speak.
Osman. Away—this modest, sweet, reluctant, Trifling
But doubles my Desires, and thy own Beauties.
Zara. Ah, me!
Osman. Nay—but thou shou'dst not be *too* cruel—
Zara. I can, no longer, bear it—Oh! my Lord—
Osman. Ha!—what!—whence? how?

The strings of Hill's heart, unmoved by Gallic rhetoric and clarity, sounded to every touch of emotion. Even into the midst of the catastrophic scenes, frenzied enough already, he threw new phrases:

Was This the Act of Love?

Swallow me, Earth!

She's silent.

Zara's dead!

And shou'd I live, to see returning Day,
'Twill shew me but her Blood!—shew me, left joyless,
In a wide, empty, World, with nothing round me,
But Penitence, and Pain.

It was not alone by additions that Hill piled on his emphasis of passion and pathos. Under his hands the French was twisted into rhetorical questions, anathemas, exclamations. If Voltaire wrote: "*Frappe, dis-je, je l'aime*"; Hill doubled him:

Strike, strike—I love him—yes, by Heav'n! I love him.

If Voltaire was satisfied with "vingt fois," Hill wrote "a thousand times."

The issue of Hill's efforts was a play of greater intensity and swifter movement, of greater verbosity and weaker poetry.

Thy Statesman's Reason is too dull for Love

was his motto and under that motto, cutting the quiet, orderly, reasoning passages of the French, and expanding its active scenes, he produced a drama better suited, in some ways, for stage presentation, but infinitely less impressive for closet reading. There was more beauty of phrase in the French; more attempt to stir the heart in the English. There was too, an eagerness for event, an intolerance of discussion:

Swifter, ye Hours, move on; my Fury glows
Impatient, and wou'd push the wheels of Time,

said Osman. The whole attempt to hasten the progress of the plot and to heighten its tension was based on a sound understanding of the psychology of English audiences, and if its result was often melodrama, that was the fault of Hill's lack of power, not of his purpose.

Whatever the real value of Hill's work, it was colored with traces of the periods of English drama that had gone before. Elizabethan romanticism was there, with its motives of revenge, its pathetic fallacies of nature's sympathy with man's moods, and its taste for violent and depicted death; the heroic drama was there, with its search of love and honor, its superman of limitless fortitude and its tattered passions; the sentimental drama was there, with its tedious morals and impossibly perfect hero. These relics of past times on the stage were not chance resemblances supplied by the text of Voltaire, but new material. Thus their meaning grew; for while they touched only a fraction of the issues of the play, they were a considerable part of the changes made by Hill.

Vengeance, then, was made the declared motive of the hero.

"Revenge," he cried "stand firm, and intercept his Wishes:" . . .
"Revenge!"

The background fitted the deed:

Silent, and dark,
Th' unbreathing World is hush'd, as if it heard,
And listen'd to, your Sorrows.

O, treach'rous Night!
Thou lend'st thy ready Veil, to ev'ry Treason,
And teeming Mischiefs thrive, beneath thy Shade.

Nor Tread of Mortal Foot—nor Voice, I hear:
The still Seraglio lies, profoundly plung'd,
In Deathlike Silence! nothing stirs.—The Air
Is soft, as Infant's Sleep, no breathing Wind
Steals, thro' the Shadows, to awaken Night!
Horrors, a thousand times more dark than these,
Benight my suff'ring Soul.

And at the moment of catastrophe Zara no longer fell dying in the wings,²⁹ as she did at Paris, but on the open stage.

Again, Osman's desires would not have rung false on the lips of the heroic hero:

The Trumpet's Voice has wak'd the World to War.
Yet, amidst Arms, and Death, thy Power has reach'd me:
For, thou disdain'st, like me, a languid Love;
Glory, and *Zara*, join—

His part Hill sought to elevate and to ennoble—he became, not the despairing lover, stung to unworthy reproaches, but the Emperor, with self-control relinquishing her who had been false to him, a man to whom honor was dearer than the satisfaction of desire.

Osman, in ev'ry Trial, shall remember
That he is Emperor,

'Tis due to Honour, that I give up you.

Yet, though an Emperor, he scorned despotism and servility. To a servant too humble he said:

Come nearer . . . Rise!
Bring it, with Speed—Shame on your flatt'ring Distance.
Advancing, and snatching the Letter.

²⁹ "selon les règles classiques," comments the French editor (*Oeuvres*, II, 614).

Be honest—and approach me, like a Subject,
Who serves the Prince, yet, not forgets the Man.

This hero, passionate, honorable, ideal, fell to rant like many an Almanzor. Where, in the French, he had said calmly, ironically,

Eh bien . . . que dis-tu?

he cried:

Hell! Torture! Death! and Woman—
What? . . .
Are we awake? Heard'st thou?

Or again he exclaimed:

Leave me, Life.
.
I grow Mad.
.
Leave me, to Rage, Despair, and Shame, and Wrongs.

The bombastic, high-worded manner of heroic drama did not offend Aaron Hill "of turgid memory"; no more did the generalizations of sentimental drama. Most of the virtuous truths he added touched on love or position:

. . . Emperors
Who chuse to sigh, devoted, at the Feet
Of Beauties, whom the World conceives their Slaves,
Have Fortune's Claim, at least, to sure Success.
.
But, 'twere profane to think of Pow'r, in Love.
Dear, as my Passion makes you, I decline
Possession of her Charms, whose Heart's Another's:
With Forms, and Rev'rence, let the *Great* approach us
Not the Unhappy:—Every Place, alike
Gives the Distress'd a Privilege to enter.

Monarchs, by Forms of pompous Misery, press'd,
In proud, unsocial, Solitude, unblest'd,
Wou'd, but for Love's soft Influence, curse their Throne,
And, among crowded Millions, live, *alone*.

Thus Hill, in his first adaptation from Voltaire, with his definite scheme to make it catch the "Turn of our National Difference," did not revise the plot, shift the characters or alter the motive. But the manner of the play under his hands grew strained, artificial and alliterative, as narrative and reflection were reduced and action expanded. There were scenes which in their new form suggested the violence, the bombast and the tediousness of Elizabethan, heroic, and sentimental drama. The play in which Voltaire indulged all the sensibility of his heart, "the most touching of all tragedies,"³⁰ was made still more indulgent, still more touching. The loves and the baptisms and the deaths that Voltaire drew were breathed more ardently, performed more devoutly, faced with more impassioned heroism. To be sure, it was a false glamor of elevation, great deeds, lofty morals: and not the force of natural act and simple truth, that was added. But the English taste for such passages of posed tenderness was strong, and the vigor of the applause of 1736, applause that was to continue almost a century, placed the seal of approval on Hill's work. It was a pleasant augury for the future. Hill's career as the interpreter of Voltaire in England was auspiciously begun.

ALZIRA

It was only two weeks after *Zara's* successful appearance in London, that *Alzire*, another tragedy by Voltaire, was enthusiastically greeted in Paris. The news soon came to London, and Hill entered at once on the second phase of his campaign to hold the field of English adaptation of Voltaire. *Alzire* should be his. He began by writing in *The Prompter*:³¹

[I] observed in the News Papers, that the Tragedy of *Alzira* was brought over from *Paris*, where it had been acted *four Months together*, . . . The circumstances excited a Curiosity, answerable to the Difference they seem to make manifest, between the *French Dramatic Taste*, and the *English*, . . . I sent for the Play, which open'd with no small Expecta-

³⁰ Quotation from Laharpe, in Voltaire, *Oeuvres*, II, 535.

³¹ No. 158 and no. 159, May, 1736.

tion. . . . As the Curiosity of the Public must have been rais'd by the uncommon Success of this Play, a Taste of it cannot fail to be an agreeable Entertainment to our Countrymen.

There followed a hundred and sixty lines of the first act, very much retouched in translation.

This time Hill did not propose that his adaptation should languish long in manuscript. On June 3, he wrote to Voltaire:³²

now the Actors (perfect in their parts) are ready to begin its representation. . . . *Alzira* was sent too late to *London*: she should else, in one and the same season, have inspired the *stages* of two nations; but, even as it is, a company of very skilful actors are now re-opening the great Theatre, in *Lincoln's-Inn fields*, in order to perform this tragedy . . . I own, I have encouraged them in this attempt, in *summer*, to protect you from a *winter* storm of mercenary pens, that, tempted by your *Zaïre's* success, were threatening to disjoint *Alzira*: But, to prevent her being blotted, by defacing pencils, I chose rather to produce her hastily, much less a beauty than you drew her, than permit her to be robbed more slowly of her spirit, air, and likeness . . . such a precipitation will excuse the *faults* in my own version, and convince you of my zeal to save you from *duller*.

Perhaps these duller spirits and mercenary pens lived only in the imagination of Hill. He had not hesitated to attack Duncombe, it was not his nature to avoid a quarrel: and if he had had a known opponent here it is doubtful if he would have been content with this anonymous charge. Moreover this was a message of flattery, in which Hill, dubbed "the man of letters" by Voltaire, was returning the compliment by assuring the Frenchman that he knew him in his noblest self, as millions knew Homer and Euripides, and as future millions would know this new genius. So it was quite in part to picture a "swarm" of imitators buzzing about the latest play of the new master.³³

In any case, now that *Zara* was before the town, Hill had more influence with the managers, and two weeks after his letter to Voltaire, the new play was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields, by Gifford's company brought from Goodman's Fields. Though

³² Hill, *Works*, I, 241ff.

³³ The only evidence of any translation of *Alzire* other than Hill's is Lady Luxborough's statement that she had in her possession in 1750 a translation which William Somerville (1675-1742) had executed of Voltaire's *Alzire* (Lady Luxborough's *Letters*; ed. 1775, p. 211).

the regular season was over, the play ran for nine nights. It was repeated October 14, revived at Drury Lane, April 30, 1744, at Covent Garden, March 18 and 20, 1755, at Drury Lane again, April 29, 1757, and finally at Covent Garden, January 11 and 13, 1758.³⁴ The first edition of *Alzira* appeared soon after the production of the play, for the *London Magazine* noticed its publication in August, 1736.³⁵ There were eight editions of the single play, the latest in 1802, and eight inclusions of it in editions of collected drama, the latest in 1850.³⁶

In France, critics placed *Alzire* high, Geoffroy ranking it among the four masterpieces of Voltaire, and Laharpe calling it Voltaire's most original production, his loftiest work.³⁷ Hill, in his puff in *The Prompter*, spoke of its "Novelty and noble Contrast." But, after these golden opinions, the comments of English critics were cold. *The Monthly Review*,³⁸ to be sure, thought that *Alzira*, like *Zara*, was an improvement over its original, but Dibdin³⁹ thought the play too regular, too full of declamation; the *Biographia Dramatica*⁴⁰ likewise held that it was heavy, tedious, and insipid to the taste of an English audience, and Genest⁴¹ called it only a "moderate tragedy."

In *Alzire* Hill had a model which had no qualities beyond those of *Zaïre* and which lacked some of the power of that tragedy. It differed from *Zaïre* more in manner than in matter. As in the story of the Christian slave, there were loves, and baptisms, and deaths. In far-off Peru the true spirit of religion triumphed over the virtue of nature,⁴² as in Jerusalem it had

³⁴ Since *Alzira* did not disappear from the English stage until 1758, the statement that "it met with a fair degree of success, and was played at least nine times," made by Professor Lounsbury (*Shakespeare and Voltaire*, p. 94), and concurred in by Miss Brewster (*Aaron Hill*, p. 145) seems to overlook its later history.

³⁵ v, 463.

³⁶ See appendix.

³⁷ Voltaire, *Oeuvres*, III, 370.

³⁸ x, 26ff., and xxi, 252ff.

³⁹ *History of the Stage*, v, 47.

⁴⁰ II, 22.

⁴¹ III, 484.

⁴² *Alzire*, Discours préliminaire, *Oeuvres*, III, 279.

triumphed over the love of the heathen. But that triumph was enacted without the abandonment to emotion that Voltaire had allowed himself in the earlier play. Moreover the catastrophe was averted. Three virtuous characters had been so tangled in a web of circumstance, that their only escape seemed death or ruin. Suddenly their enemy, Carlos, repented: the web was torn: and they were free. No sacrifice or heroism brought their release, the strands were cut from without. The action slipped back to a world where caprice ruled. It was no longer the realm of tragedy and moral law, but of life and chance.

With this or any other essential problem of the play, Hill did not concern himself. The three weeks he gave to his translation left him little leisure for revision, and the marks of his haste were written across the face of the beauty that Voltaire drew,⁴³ and that he, by his own admission, so hurriedly sketched.⁴⁴ Certain changes he was bound to make, as soon as he set pen to paper. He was sure to be verbose, sure to be figurative, and sure to be antithetical.⁴⁵ It cost him more words to express a thought than it did the Frenchman: it was beyond him to resist the temptation to similes and metaphors. Of course, he broke the long passages of reflection and narration, as he had done in *Zara*, so that if Dibdin and the *Biographia Dramatica* were right in condemning *Alzira* for heaviness, they were right in spite of his efforts.

In *Zaïre* Hill had developed a method of adaptation. Given a quiet and reflective scene he added generalizations and morals: given an active and narrative scene he added rant, tumult, and

⁴³ See p. 53.

⁴⁴ For instance, Hill mistakes the preposition "à" for the verb "a," rendering "à ses traits, à son âge . . . c'est lui," by "He has Alvarez's Voice! He has his Features!"

⁴⁵ "Ours be your *Virtue*, but not ours your *Blood*."

Has not the *Parent* spoke? Why speaks the *God*?
Whate'er I *see* is, with my Father's *Eyes*:

Whate'er I *love* is, for my Father's *Sake*.

This is the *Body's Death* . . . but shakes the *Soul*.

My *Son*, of *Nature*, one . . . and one of *Choice*."

emotion, additions to which he was prompted, perhaps, by the school of sentimental drama and romantic and heroic drama.

Certainly *Alzira* was filled with those prosaic truths, those tedious morals, that once are said to have won applause by their pose of virtue. These abstractions flowed from Hill's pen like water:

Reason *gains* all Men, by *compelling* None.

Obedience claims
Returns, of *Benefit*, and due *Protection*;
Outrage and Wrongs require *Correction* only.

He does not *live at all*, who lives *to fear*.

The shortest Liver is the happiest, always.

He who is, helpless, in his Hater's Hands,
Claims Safety, from his Weakness.

Greatness with Sweetness join'd, like Fire with Light,
Each aiding other, mingle warm with bright,
What the Kind wants, th' associate Strong supplies,
And from the Gentle, Peace and Calmness rise.

Th' unhappily Belov'd most merit Pity.

Guard, Heaven,
That Husband's Honour, whom his Wife not loves!

Thus, Youth is, ever, apt to judge in haste
And lose the Medium, in the wild Extreme.

Vertue, at Midnight, walks, as safe, within,
As in the conscious Glare of flaming Day.
She who in Forms finds Vertue, has no Vertue.

After five acts inlaid with such morals, there is welcome for *Alzira's* exhaustion when she says:

I want Power
To speak a thousand Truths, I see you merit.

To Hill, the poet must be a philosopher, speaking universal truths.

The second step in the method, the addition of rant, tumult, and emotion to passages of action, was no more neglected in *Alzira* than it had been in *Zara*. The target of much of the abuse was naturally the villain.

curse the name!

Perish his name!

Who bears that name of Carlos, blasted all,

'Twas that black Devil, that scares the Christian Cowards,
Lied. . . .

let Carlos die!

Let but that Spanish Murderer, Carlos, die. . . .

a base Wretch . . .

Birth that blackens Nature! a taught Monster . . .
Guide my Vengeance to this . . . First
. . . and Vilest, of its Victims.

The heroic drama and its successors had familiarized English ears with invective and anathema, and made them strangers to the colder dignity of French tragedy. It drove Hill to the mistake of so lashing his hero to frenzy in the first act, that no reserve of energy was left for later scenes.

Not only were Hill's characters more impassioned, but his stage was more tumultuous than the French. There were "Shouts," "Guns," "Trumpets," and again "Guns" and "Shouts." Through the window could be seen

displayed

The broad red Standard that betokens Blood.

There was more of tableau, a scene more often filled with the "officious Hounds of Blood" that served the Spanish Tyrant, and echoing finally to the strains of "a dead March."

Exactly as in *Zara*, Hill raised the pitch and increased the fullness of the emotional passages of the play, until the crises, often

prodigally lengthened, were a pother of interrogation and exclamation points. Ghosts of themes familiar to the English stage walked there in lines like:

I go, where Honour calls me.

or:

But he must die: and, when he does, my Soul
Shall watch th' expected Moment, hovering, watchful,
And hunt him, in Revenge, from Star, to Star.

For his revolts from the restraint and reserve of Voltaire, Hill wrote his own justification:

Words will have Way, or Grief, suppress'd in vain,
Wou'd burst its Passage, with th' outrushing Soul.

This was the motto he had followed in *Zara*; this was the motto of all his depiction of passion.

All that Hill did in *Alzira* he had done in *Zara*; and in both he worked with sound purpose. To put more of incident, movement, and panoply of conflict on the stage; more of tumult in the wings; to give full voice to feeling, to cherish honor and revenge, was to be true to the traditions of his native stage. But here his purpose was thwarted, partly, as always, by lack of a sense of structure and of the gift of simple and sincere expression, and partly, in this case, by the harder task he faced. *Alzira* lacked the fire and intensity of *Zaïre*; Voltaire was out of the mood of strong sentiment and impatience of restraint in which he had written the former tragedy; his new work was several removes farther than his old from the English style. Then Hill had made a hurried and sketchy version; the possible rivals that haunted him drove his pen too fast. Finally there had been no Mrs. Cibber for the title rôle, and only a midsummer production in an unusual theatre. The first run was not so long; the applause was weaker; the criticisms were colder; the future of the play was not to be so prosperous. Thus the happy auguries of *Zara's* success were not being fulfilled, and Hill was in the melancholy situation of the author whose first success is not repeated by his next effort.

ROMAN REVENGE

But the weakness of *Alzira* as a successor to *Zara* was strength, compared to Hill's next adaptation from Voltaire. The man was as confident as ever; his pen was no more than dry from his version of *Alzire* than it was set to work on a new play, which was to improve not only Voltaire, but Shakespeare as well, and for which he solicited the criticisms of Pope and Bolingbroke and the favor of Quin and Garrick. Yet the play thus ambitiously conceived and fostered was destined to be only a vexation to him; to find no production during his lifetime, and to leave him thoroughly out of harmony with the Voltaire whom he had so lavishly praised.

The new work was called *Roman Revenge*, and its ancestry ran at least as far back as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

That tragedy, with its full tide of energy and force, set a-voyaging more than one play whose life was destined to be bound in shallows and in miseries. Voltaire early attempted to retell the story. At Wandsworth or London in 1726 he sketched a *Mort de César*, which he completed in 1731.⁴⁶ It was obscurely played at the hotel in the town of Sassenage in 1733, and by the scholars of the College of Harcourt in 1735, circulated in a furtive and pirated edition at Paris, and first authentically issued in 1736. An edition in the original French was printed by Innis in London that year. By 1737 Hill had finished his *Roman Revenge*, which wove into a tangled skein many threads from Voltaire's play, from Shakespeare's and from his own mind. He sent it "to all his particular friends, and amongst the rest, to Mr. Pope and Lord Bolingbroke."⁴⁷ Pope was said to have "approved of it in the highest terms, at the same time that he pointed out some faults for . . . correction."⁴⁷ Bolingbroke told Hill:⁴⁷

The tragedy is finely wrote; the characters admirably well drawn; the sentiments are noble, beyond the power of words; and the expression, dignified as it is, can add nothing to the sublime.

⁴⁶ *Oeuvres*, III, 305.

⁴⁷ Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 148ff.

We have doubted (Mr. Pope and I) whether, in some few instances, the utmost effort of language has not obscured the beauty and force of thought.

[it is] . . . one of the noblest dramas that our language, or any other, can boast.⁴⁸

But all was not to go so well with *Roman Revenge* as this letter might indicate. Davies says:

The letter itself was shewn to the managers of both playhouses, though without producing the effect which Mr. Hill might possibly expect. This play, on which his heart was so set, had been offered and received, promised to be acted and rejected, several times during the space of ten years. Quin refused to act the part of Caesar . . . Mr. Hill tried all his art to make Mr. Garrick in love with his great idol, Caesar . . . his efforts were in vain. Mr. Garrick had absolutely discouraged any farther application upon the subject.

Hill's perseverance had no reward during his lifetime. It was not until the summer of 1753, the third year after his death, that his tragedy was acted, and its production then was an obscure one, in the theatre at Bath. The exact date is uncertain: in fact Miss Brewster, Hill's fullest biographer, does not mention the performance. But London magazines of that year recorded it,⁴⁹ and the 1760 edition of Hill's works, on the preliminary page, supplied the cast,⁵⁰ an unusually long one, made up of actors of

⁴⁸ Miss Brewster (*Aaron Hill*, p. 235) hints that the compliments of Pope and Bolingbroke are to be taken with a grain of salt, that, instead of being "frank and sincere," they are a sort of penance for obligations due to Hill.

⁴⁹ The *London Magazine* for December, 1753 (xxii, 575), reprinted the "Prologue to the Roman Revenge, a Tragedy by the Late Aaron Hill, Esquire, acted at Bath," and the *Monthly Magazine* for the following January (x, 79) said: "This posthumous play of that eminent poet, the late Mr. Hill, was acted last summer, with success, as we are informed, at Bath"; and in another article (x, 30) remarked that "this piece was acted at Bath, in the summer of 1753, and is now printed." The *Biographia Dramatica* (iii, 219) repeated the statement that "This play was acted at the Theatre at Bath with some success"; while Genest (iii, 94), after saying that "in 1753 Aaron Hill published his *Roman Revenge*" (Hill died in 1750), added, "it had been acted at Bath."

⁵⁰ "The Roman Revenge," A Tragedy. Acted at the Theatre in Bath.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

Julius Caesar	Mr. Brown
Marcus Brutus	Mr. Castle
Marc Antony	Mr. Faulkner
Torbilius	Mr. Brookes

little prominence. Though there are no details of the performance, it is evident that when this play, on which Hill's heart was "so set," did finally come upon an English stage, it was not with the dignity of which its author had dreamed when he approached Quin and Garrick in its behalf.

But though the voyage of the play was bound in miseries during Hill's lifetime, and though it reached only an obscure port after his death, it had not yet met the worst shocks of its destiny. Its earlier critics, like Pope and Bolingbroke, praised it, perfunctorily perhaps but at least superlatively; its latest have damned it with just as superlative a vehemence. Miss Brewster throws up her hands,⁵¹ saying "The French play has one striking advantage over the English one—it is very much shorter; but I shall not compare them further, for no discussion could escape the infection of their dullness." Professor Lounsbury⁵² says that Hill's play

. . . has about every fault which can be found in Voltaire's without any of its merits . . . its most distinguishing characteristic is its unrelieved prosiness. The steady stream of platitudes, which pours through it without restraint and without cessation, makes this play one of the most wearisome in that unrivalled collection of the dramatically tedious which we call eighteenth-century tragedy. Even he who has, in a measure, been

Cassius	Mr. Furnival
Cimber	Mr. Richardson
Decimus	Mr. Kennedy
Casca	Mr. Cox
Cinna	Mr. Blahay
Marcellus	Mr. Mason
Trinovantius	Mr. Stephens
Curio	Mr. Hill
An Augur, Officers, Licitors, and Plebeians	
Calphurnia	Miss Kennedy
Portia	Miss Low
Flavia	Mrs. Richardson

The Mr. Hill who took the part of Curio was perhaps that son of the deceased dramatist, who, according to the *Monthly Review* for January, 1754 (x. 79), published his father's play in an "impression amazingly incorrect." This was evidently the 1753 edition, which is mentioned in Baker's *Biographia Dramatica* (III, 219), and noted in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December, 1753 (XXIII, 593), and in the *General Magazine* (VI, 668) for the same month, as printed by Mitchell. A second edition, published in London in 1754, is extant.

⁵¹ Aaron Hill, p. 148.

⁵² *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, pp. 113ff.

prepared for its perusal by frequent previous struggles with pieces of a similar character, will find it difficult not to be overcome by its deadly dullness.

The work, which has proved so soporific to recent scholars, owed its birth perhaps to Voltaire's statement of his purpose in the "Avertissement"⁵³ to the 1736 edition of *La Mort de César*. After describing Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* as a monstrosity, in which there were parts which were masterpieces of nature, Voltaire remarked that it was "a mixture of the most terrible qualities of tragedy and the lowest qualities of farce." He determined to write a *Julius Caesar* "which, without resembling Shakespeare's, would be, nevertheless, entirely according to English taste." His changes were the reduction of time and place to a rigid unity, and of action to a catastrophe off the stage; the suppression of love and the omission of any female characters, and the addition of Caesar's paternity to Brutus. The result of these changes was a short three-act play, of unusual compression and unity, but of unrelieved coldness and formality. The springs of art Voltaire tapped, but the springs of life he neglected. From Shakespeare his chief borrowings were the characterizations of Caesar and Anthony, the letters used to incite Brutus, the account of the fiaseo of Caesar's coronation, and Anthony's speech over the dead body of Caesar. The rest of Shakespeare's play, the auguries, the fears of Portia and Calpurnia, the visible assassination, and the tumult, apparition, philosophy, and retribution of the last two acts, had no counterpart in his work. There the conflict in Brutus between filial love and patriotic duty formed the main thread of action and ran through every part. In the first act Antony, and in the second act Brutus, learned that Caesar was Brutus' father. In the third, the inexorable patriot in Brutus triumphed over the son; Brutus permitted the assassination of Caesar, and the people were turned to fury against him by his unnatural rigor.

Roman Revenge, which was to reconcile the vigor of Shake-

⁵³ Though purporting to be written by the Abbé de la Mare, this preface was substantially of Voltaire's own composition (Lounsbury, *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, p. 105).

speare with the austerity of Voltaire, was a turgid mixture in which *Julius Caesar*, *La Mort de César*, and Aaron Hill in a mood of straining bombast, were all elements. Hill was responsible for the mass of sentiments, epigrams, virtuous mottoes, long-winded arguments and clogging generalizations that choked the progress of the action. Over it all was cast the shadow of the philosopher and moralizer, until, in form if not in matter, it came to resemble a Platonic dialogue rather than a drama.

As a protest against the coldness of Voltaire's masculine cast and loveless plot, Hill introduced scenes of feminine and love-inspired incident, but his women were conspirators, coworkers, intriguers; they brought no softer note into the play. Their addition would support, not contradict, Voltaire's assertion concerning the English:⁵⁴ "You are believed to prefer an intrigue of conspirators to an intrigue of lovers. It is thought that in your theatre there is applause at the word 'patriotism,' and in ours at the word 'love.'"

Even the weariest conspiracy must somewhere come to dissolution or to issue. Shakespeare placed the assassination of Caesar in the middle of his third act; Voltaire placed it towards the end of his third and last act; Hill managed to postpone it to the end of his fifth act. There, warm with the belief that he was improving on his predecessors, he sought to invest it with new force and solemnity, just as earlier he had added 'loud thunder' to mark the oath-taking of the conspirators. Portents, used by Shakespeare, neglected by Voltaire, became present prodigies. A prophet raven screamed:

That, conscious, on the dome's high mould'ring roof,
Feels, and foretels, that Caesar's ghost is *rising*.

A noise was heard without, like the fall of a building:

The long, venerable line of statues . . . lies fallen.

Then followed long and loud thunder. C'mber said:

The pavement,
Heav'd, in disjointed surge, rolls loose beneath me.

⁵⁴ See p. 26.

And Cassius cried:

'Tis glorious ruin!—round our heads
Fall Rome's imperial turrets:—earthquake and tempest
Plow the mix'd elements: noises, far heard
Live in the winds, and *voice* the frantic air—
Day darkens: and the eye of Heaven seems quench'd.

Later Trinobantius told how

The pallid *Vestals* wildly screaming;
Fled, from th' *extinguish'd* fire, robeless, and *bare*:
And blind amidst the dust of *crumbling towers*:
 . . . Doors of *sepulchres*
Untouch'd, fly open: and from silent *urns*,
 . . . slow-ascending *shades*
Catch form.

On such a day as this Brutus told the conspirators that he was Caesar's son, and made a last appeal to Caesar, as he did in Voltaire. Although Hill had brought the incident of Portia's self-inflicted wound on the stage, he left the assassination of Caesar behind the scenes, to be narrated by Antony. Caesar's last words were not of simple woe, as in Shakespeare, but of philosophy:

All, cruel murderer? what! all? And thou! my *Son*!
My *Brutus*! nay then, to conquer,
Were to perpetuate *pain*: and death grows joy.

But, before the curtain fell, the audience was told how

Brutus! all wild, as with a *jury's* horror,
Gaz'd up, down, round—wrung his clos'd hands—ran—stopt,
Return'd—then, with a bursting sigh, resum'd
Composure: kneel'd, and kiss'd the robe of Caesar:
But snatching a fall'n *dagger*, rose distracted,
And cry'd "Take, take me vengeance! Rome is *free*."

Here was a Brutus much changed from the composed Roman of *Julius Caesar*, who made too much use of his philosophy to give way to accidental evils.

Hill used five acts to reach the point that Shakespeare and Voltaire came to in three, and he went no farther. Voltaire

went as far as the funeral oration of Antony, almost literally appropriated from the Elizabethan; Hill ended with the departure of the populace to the Forum to hear that oration. Hill's last lines were Antony's mournful ones:

All fruit of power is *pain*: and what is *fame*?
When ev'n a Caesar's glory stains his name.

Hill, then, in remolding for the English *La Mort de César*, written by Voltaire to suit his conception of English taste, quite reversed the Frenchman's ideas. He believed that English taste demanded in such a play more intrigue, more philosophizing, more solemnity and tableau, the presence of female characters, and a protagonist who, instead of ruling his woes, was torn out of self-control by them. So he elongated the action by incidents of Shakespeare's and his own invention, and sought to adorn it with studied morals. He attempted to enforce the motive by presenting it in scenes elaborately detailed and full of portents. To the *dramatis personae* he added Calpurnia and Portia, and Servilia off the stage; he made Brutus speak with greater freedom and greater bitterness. But as far as genuine dramatic or poetic quality went, he had reached his nadir; he had fallen as far below *Alzira* as in *Alzira* he had fallen below *Zara*; he had written "one of the most wearisome" plays in an "unrivaled collection of the dramatically tedious,"⁵⁵ a play for which, with all his influence, he could get no production. *Roman Revenge* must have disillusioned Hill; it must have given the quietus to any dream he had cherished of a continuous source of fame for himself and improvement for the English theatre through the works of Voltaire.

MEROPE

The Aaron Hill of 1736, assuring Voltaire that he knew him in his noblest self, as millions knew Homer and Euripides, basking in the Frenchman's salutation of "man of letters," was not, then, to remain forever in that flattering and complacent mood. The time came when he had been "forced into Abatements" of

⁵⁵ See p. 44.

the disposition he once felt to look upon Voltaire as a generous thinker.⁵⁶ Though still an adapter of his work, he was so "upon a motive more malignant"; he sought, not to save him "from a winter storm of mercenary pens," but to "mend with the bad view to mortify him."⁵⁷ The disillusionment was mutual. Voltaire now knew Aaron Hill "by reputation . . . a worthy Englishman," who stole from the French and then spoke ill of them.⁵⁸ The spark of this final estrangement was lighted by Voltaire in 1744, in a dedication of his *Mérope*, performed the previous year, to the Italian playwright Maffei, on whose work he had founded his tragedy. There he wrote:

A *Mérope* was presented on the London stage in 1731.⁵⁹ Who would believe that a love plot would still have been made a part of the play? But since Charles the Second's reign, love had taken possession of the English theatre, and it must be stated that there is not a nation in the world which has painted that passion so badly . . . it seems that the same cause which deprives the English of the genius of painting and of music denies them also that of tragedy.

In the year of this attack John Theobald published a version of Voltaire's play, a "mere translation . . . never brought on the stage,"⁶⁰ and Hill began an adaptation of it, which he finished in 1745.⁶¹ Hill's play was not printed until 1749, but in that year the advertisement to his first edition made pyrotechnic answer to Voltaire's charges. Voltaire was berated for "presumptuous Puffiness," "over-active Sensibility to his own Country's Claims," "unfeeling Stupidity, in judging the Pretensions of his Neighbors." To his "provoking Stimulation" wrote Hill:

⁵⁶ *Mérope*, Introduction; edition 1749.

⁵⁷ Hill, *Works*, II, 345.

⁵⁸ Letter to Raynal, July 30, 1749, *Oeuvres*, XXXVII, 38.

⁵⁹ This was George Jeffrey's *Mérope*, presented at Lincoln's Inn Fields, February 27, 1731. Quin, Ryan, Milward, and Mrs. Berryman were in the cast, but the play was a failure, and the audience was dismissed on the second night (*Biographia Dramatica*, III, 36). Years later in a preface to a 1754 edition of his play (quoted in *Gentleman's Magazine*, LXX, 40, December, 1770), Jeffrey returned Voltaire's attack with energy, charging him with adopting improvements in the play made by Jeffrey, and flourishing on them as his own.

⁶⁰ *Biographia Dramatica*, III, 36.

⁶¹ Hill, *Works*, II, 307.

I have ow'd Inducement, to *retouch*, for Mr. *Voltaire's* Use, the Characters in his high-boasted *Meropé*: and I have done it on a Plan as near his own, as I could *wring* it, with safe Conscience: that is to say, without Distaste to *English* Audiences. For he must pardon me, if I am sensible, that our *unpolish'd London Stage*, (as he assumes the Liberty of calling it) has entertained a nobler Taste of dignify'd *Simplicity*, than to deprive dramatic Poetry of all that animates its Passions; in Pursuit of a *cold, starr'd, tame, Abstinence*; which, from an Affectation to shun *Figure*, sinks to *Flatness*: an *elaborate Escape* from *Energy*, into a groveling, wearisome, bald, barren, unalarming, *Chillness* of Expression, that *emasculates* the Mind, instead of *moving* it.

However changed Hill's motives and mood in writing *Meropé* may have been from those with which he began the earlier adaptations, this last one was to come nearest to repeating the success of *Zara*. But first it repeated *Zara's* long experience in manuscript, not being produced until "after many delays and many letters."⁶² in 1749.

But when Garrick finally did put on the play at Drury Lane, on April 15 of that year he gave it an excellent production. He himself took the leading male rôle, that of Eumenes, and in the opinion of the ladies,⁶³ "looked and acted like an angel." He "did all that could be effected to make the character striking and popular."⁶⁴ Mrs. Cibber refused the rôle of Merope, imagining perhaps that the mother's part did not fit "her slim maidenly figure";⁶⁵ but Mrs. Pritchard was enlisted to play the rôle, and Hill's *Advertisement* gave no hint of disappointment. "The Universally acknowledged, and *felt*, skill, of a *Eumenes*, and a *Meropé*, such as no stage ever saw excell'd, (not to name *Others*, who deserv'd Applause, and met with it, to a degree excitingly uncommon) leaves it quite unnecessary to add any Thing upon That Subject."

According to the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1749,⁶⁶ the play was acted nine nights, and then put off until the next season, while, according to Genest,⁶⁷ it was acted eleven times.

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⁶³ Genest, IV, 269.

⁶⁴ Adolphus, *Memoirs of John Bannister*, pp. 34ff.

⁶⁵ Davies, *Life of Garrick*, I, 146.

⁶⁶ XIX, 171.

⁶⁷ IV, 269.

Probably it was performed twice in the spring after the April number of the *Gentleman's Magazine* went to press. It was more than sixty-five years before it left the English stage.⁶⁸ In 1750, by the command of the Prince of Wales, it was revived for three benefit performances for Hill,⁶⁹ who died the day before the first one, "in the very minute of the Earthquake," the eighth of February.⁷⁰ For his heirs a sum of £148 was realized by these performances. The seasons of 1753, 1754, 1757, 1759, 1760, 1766, 1770, 1773, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1806 at Drury Lane all saw performances of *Merope*. In 1777 it appeared at both theatres, being presented for the first time at Covent Garden on January 17, and revived at Drury Lane on January 22. Again in 1806 there were rival productions of it, one at Covent Garden in February and one at Drury Lane in March. Moreover, it was played at Dublin in 1762, at Covent Garden in 1787 and 1797, and at Bath in 1777, 1806, and 1815. Thus it was not far behind *Zara* in the length of its life in England.

Critics and public evidently paid no attention to the venomous spirit with which Hill undertook the work, or regarded it as in any sense a challenge to Voltaire. In fact, its chief contemporary critic, whose opinions were published in the same form in three magazines,⁷¹ contrasted Hill's work, not with the French but with Theobald's translation of the French, admitting that he could not judge whether Hill had "improved the sentiment or expression of Voltaire." Aside from this uninformed criticism, the magazines confined their attention to a printing of the fable,⁷² of the prologue and epilogue,⁷³ and of notices of the publication.⁷⁴

But as *Merope* became something of a stock piece in later

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⁶⁹ *General Advertiser*, February 3, 1750.

⁷⁰ Victor, *History of the London Theatres*, II, 124-125.

⁷¹ *Gentleman's Magazine* (XIX, 171), *Scot's Magazine* (XI, 110), and *General Magazine* (II, 185) for April, 1749.

⁷² *General Magazine*, II, 185; *Gentleman's Magazine*, XIX, 174.

⁷³ *London Magazine*, XVIII, 189; *Scot's Magazine*, XI, 162; *General Magazine*, II, 195; *Gentleman's Magazine*, XIX, 180; *Theatrical Bouquet*, pp. 118, 224; *Universal Magazine*, IV, 147.

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⁷⁴ *London Magazine*, XVIII, 244; *Scot's Magazine*, XI, 208; *Gentleman's*

came to some central critical passage there was a burst of energy and enthusiasm, accompanied by a shower of morals, but followed by a period of quiet, almost literal rendition. There was consistently a more crowded, active stage, with "Shouts without," and actors grouped in tableau within.

The most elaborate of these stage pictures came at the tomb of Cresphontes, where Hill directed:

Solemn Procession to a Dead March. Euricles with the Sword. Eumenes, in Chains. Guards. Priests, as to Sacrifice. The Queen goes up weeping, and kneels silent, at the Tomb. While The Rest range themselves, on each side of the scene. Sad and solemn Musick. . . . a Song, of Sacrifice, by . . . Chief Priest, with Chorus of Priests and Virgins.

While in Voltaire Merope moved single-handed to her revenge, in Hill she was surrounded with the pageantry of priests and chorons; while in Voltaire she raised her sword straightway, in Hill she raised it only after a series of balanced invocations, each echoed by the chorus; while in Voltaire she sought a personal and painful vengeance, in Hill her motive became a glorification of the abstract idea of revenge.

The final action was given a mystic accompaniment, as in *Roman Revenge*:

. . . strait, the Priest look'd pale,
The Lights extinguish'd—and the Temple's Roof,
Shook by descending Thunder, seem'd to bow!
The God! The God! the reverend Starter cry'd.

It was also made more satisfying by a death-bed repentance of the tyrant, who remorsefully recognized the justice of his fate, instead of falling without a word as he did in Voltaire.

Finally, as a last concession to sentiment, Hill restored a trace of the passion of love, banished, of course, by Voltaire, who had so harshly criticized Jeffrey for his use of it. He made Eumenes, a dozen lines before the end, turn to Ismene and say:

Unless this softer copy of thy Goodness,
Loveliest Ismene, smiles on my sweet Hope:
And stoops to be a Queen—to bless her *Father*.
I mark a meaning Blush, that looks Consent:
And hear thee, tho' thou speak'st not.—Till anon,
Suspend we Thoughts, thus tender.

These tender thoughts, so undeveloped, so out of place in the tragedy of *Mcrope*, were characteristic of Hill's work. Writing at a time when a whole nation wept at the woes of Pamela, and sentiments did not often lie too deep for tears, he let himself drift in the full stream of artificial feeling.

So closed Hill's work with Voltaire. He was a strutting figure in the shadow of a powerful man. In his life Voltaire loomed large; in Voltaire's he was nothing. But he posed in his little circle; he flattered, reviled, condemned, and sought to "mortify" the unmoved author of the shadow. "I have heard of him by reputation," wrote Voltaire,⁸⁰ "a worthy Englishman who steals from us and then speaks ill of us." But the worthy Englishman carried his self-esteem to the end, and that in the face of disappointment, refusal and flat failure. The next generation gave him, ironically enough, his revenge, keeping his *Zara* and *Mcrope* on the stage in the face of all native rivals and of many new adaptations of Voltaire.

Their vitality, though it came too late to comfort him, supplied a test for success in bringing French tragedies to England. It could not be due to their style, for "the speeches, even in scenes of vehemence, [were] long, cold and tedious, in a stile of declamation without passion, warmth, or energy."⁸¹ They were full of the small coin of poetry, with little precious metal in the alloy. The secret of their life lay elsewhere. It was in the warmth of feeling with which Hill sought to invest them. *Roman Revenge*, a complete failure, was condemned to a deathly chill by its very motive and material. *Alzira*, a partial failure, cold and restrained in French, was given no new life in its hurried English form. But *Zara* and *Mcrope*, though undertaken with contrasting motives, shared one desire and one impulse—to give utterance to the passions. In *Zara* Voltaire first loosened the shackles and Hill cast them entirely off; in *Mcrope* Hill, in revolt against the taste that deprived "dramatic Poetry of all that animates its Passions; in Pursuit of cold, starv'd, tame Absti-

⁸⁰ See p. 49.

⁸¹ Davies, *Life of Garrick*, II, 167.

nence," gave full license to his pen, and wrote a play that throbbed with unreal but elevated emotion. Both lived long; and their long life, contrasted with the early decease of *Alzira*, and the briefness of the glimmer of life for *Roman Revenge*, pointed the English adapter the way he must go, if he would give any vigor to the appeal of Voltaire's dramatic works in England.

CHAPTER IV

MAHOMET THE IMPOSTOR

Voltaire, of all men of his time least afraid to play with the fire of religious prejudice, was probably neither surprised nor daunted when his tragedy, *Le Fanatisme*, brought upon his head the wrath of the Paris bigots. Produced at Paris in August, 1742, after being four times performed at Lille in 1741, it was greeted with violent protests against the spectacle of a murder ordered by Mahomet, and of religion used to drive a young fanatic to crime. The protests culminated in what Voltaire called "a dangerous cabal," to which he yielded, withdrawing the play after three performances.

It is one of the little ironies of dramatic history that *Le Fanatisme*, attacked by supporters of the church in France, should have been introduced to England by two clergymen, James Miller and John Hoadly. The first was bred to business, but entered holy orders; the second was born son of a bishop and destined to an ecclesiastical career. Yet each turned to the theatre; Miller to eke out a spare income; Hoadly to indulge an innate fondness for the stage. The former, while holding the living of Upcerne in 1743, prepared a version of *Le Fanatisme* called *Mahomet*, his first attempt in tragedy. The latter is said to have contributed the fifth act of the adaptation.¹ The play was accepted by Garrick and produced at Drury Lane April 25, 1744, with Garrick himself as Zaphna. On the succeeding night Miller died, and soon after Fleetwood, manager of Drury Lane, arranged a benefit performance for his widow. Despite a quarrel between the manager and town, which was causing nightly riots at the theatre,² the audience at the benefit was large and peaceful, and a substantial sum was realized.

It was a decade after Garrick's production when *Mahomet*

¹ *Biographia Dramatica*, III, 7. See p. 66.

² *Ibid.*, III, 7.

made its next appearance, this time in Dublin. Thomas Sheridan, father of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, was manager of the theatre in Smock Alley, and political feeling was at its usual Irish height when *Mahomet* was brought out on February 2, 1754, with Sheridan as Zaphna, Mrs. Woffington as Palmira, and Digges as Alcanor. The pit was filled with leaders of the Country Party, and the performance took an unexpected turn when a speech³ by Digges, as Alcanor, was seized upon as a party stroke. The pit roared "encore." Digges was astonished, but, the demand growing more vehement, readily spoke the whole speech again. The applause that followed was thunderous, and Alcanor was the hero of the play. The best efforts of Sheridan and Mrs. Woffington as Zaphna and Palmira were coldly received, and the chagrined manager withdrew the play for a month.

On March 1, the day before *Mahomet* was announced for its second performance, Sheridan gave his company a lecture on the relations of actor and audience, condemning any actor who should "mark out a passage," and any audience that should "claim the right to encore a speech." He issued no orders to Digges, but advised him to act as he thought proper.

The next night the pit was crowded, the audience on edge for Alcanor's speech. Digges delivered it, as much in part as his self-consciousness would permit. The expected cries of "encore" came. Digges excused himself, saying that he had private reasons, and that his compliance with these calls would be greatly injurious to himself. This hint of undue influence from Sheridan was exactly what the hostile party wanted. Sheridan was called for, but he had left the theatre when the tumult began. Mrs. Woffington and Digges tried in vain to quiet the audience, which after an hour of clamorous waiting turned

³ "If, ye Powers divine!

Ye mark the Movements of this nether World,

And bring them to Account, crush, crush those Vipers

Who singled out by a Community

To guard their Rights, shall for a grasp of Oar

Or paltry Office, sell 'em to the Foe."

There is no parallel for this speech in Voltaire.

into a mob. It demolished the theatre, smashing the public part "all in pieces," cutting and slashing the curtain and scenes, and attempting to set fire to the building. The damage was not repaired short of March 18, and Sheridan gave up the manager-ship of Smock Alley.

The next season, after six weeks, about twenty voices in the pit called for *Mahomet*. Fourteen days later the management complied. The house was only half full, the crucial speech was spoken twice, and the rest of the tragedy allowed to go off "as flatly as possible."⁴

Garriek entertained "a predilection for this piece,"⁵ which lead him to revive it, after a lapse of twenty years. For the new production at Drury Lane November 25, 1765, he altered the original of Miller and Hoadly. "His alterations," says Genest,⁶ were "slight . . . chiefly omissions . . . [with] some verbal alterations for the better,⁷ and some for the worse."⁸ In fact, Garriek's work came very near being a restoration of Voltaire, so far as that was possible without a new translation. His omissions ranged from single epithets through lines and figures of speech to whole passages two pages in length, and always aimed to cut what was not essential to the action. Reflections, figures, forced alliterations and violent passages were suppressed, and the play stripped of all verbiage.

In its new and more rapid form, and with the aid of the careful instruction which Garriek gave Cautherley in the rôle of Zaphna, the play ran for seven or eight times in the season of 1765-1766, and entered on a considerable stage career. It was performed at Covent Garden in 1767, 1768, 1772, 1786, and 1796; and at Drury Lane in 1776, 1778, and 1795. It invaded the provinces, appearing at Liverpool in 1772, at New York in 1780, 1795, and 1796, at Baltimore in 1782, at Boston in 1797, at Birmingham in the season of 1810-1811, and at Bath in 1783, the

⁴ Genest, x, 381ff.

⁵ Adolphus, *Memoirs of John Bannister*, pp. 34ff.

⁶ v, 89.

⁷ Garriek's actual verbal changes were few and trivial. For instance, "unwont ardor" became "matchless ardor" (p. 12); "Tyrant" became "Traitor" (p. 58).

season of 1807-1808, 1813, and 1817. The casts for these performances included Powell, Bannister, Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Siddons, Kemble, Macready, and for its last performance Howard Payne, "the American Roscius."

The biographies of these performers do not as a rule speak enthusiastically of their work in *Mahomet* or of the potentialities of the play,⁸ but it has been praised by the *Biographia Dramatica* and by Genest. The former holds⁹ that Voltaire's "writings breathe such a spirit of liberty, and have contracted such a resemblance to the manner of the English authors that they seem better adapted to succeed on the English stage without much alteration than those of any other foreign writer," while Genest,¹⁰ though he finds flaws in the character of Mahomet, and points out one of the anachronisms which are his particular prey, thinks that the play has "considerable merit."

The French original was a mixture of fanaticism, incest, murder, and suicide. Zaphna and Palmira, ignorant that they were brother and sister, were reared by Mahomet and turned by their devotion to him into disastrous courses. Deceived by Mahomet, Zaphna unwittingly murdered his own father, Alcanor, and Palmira committed suicide. This tragedy, which at its climax was such a "fracas" that it seemed insupportable to Voltaire himself,¹¹ was narrated by him with smoothness, elevation, and dignity, the violence of the action not breaking down the restraint and formalism of his manner.

But the instant that the play came to the English stage its style was sharply altered. Miller purposed a thorough-going adaptation, not a close translation; he felt free to shift material to new places for new uses¹² and to reclothe ideas in language

⁸ For instance: *Memoirs of Bannister*, pp. 34ff; *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, II, 192; *Reminiscences*, Macready, p. 47.

⁹ III, 7.

¹⁰ IV, 66ff.

¹¹ *Oeuvres*, IV, 155.

¹² Alcanor's prayer, shifted from the end of scene 2, act I, to the end of the act. Zaphna's praise of Alcanor, shifted from act III, scene 1, to act II, scene 1. Mahomet's altercation with Alcanor, shifted from act I, scene 4, to act II.

of his own. His blank verse, if it achieved little, attempted much, and, though often harsh, had yet a touch of eloquence. He was unrelenting in breaking long declamatory speeches into dialogue; he was equally alert to expand passages that touched his imagination. *Le Fanatisme*, under his hands, displayed a style distinctly native and English rather than exotic and translated; this style had the faults of the contemporary English dramatic manner, but it had the virtue of being vigorously personal.

To begin with, Miller's version bristled with passages mostly of his own invention, that were figurative and impassioned, full of alliteration, balance, and the conscious seeking of effect. Aleanor, for instance, who in the French said simply:

Faut-il donner mon sang? faut-il porter leurs fers?

now cried:

If I must bear their Chains, double the Weight,
And I will kiss the Hand that puts them on;
Or if my streaming Blood must be the Purchase,
Drain ev'ry Shive and Channel of my Body
My swelling Veins will burst to give it Passage.

Mahomet, introspective, thought:

My warring Passions, like contending Clouds,
When fraught with Thunder's fatal Fuel, burst
Upon themselves, and rend me with the Shock.
And shall enervating, contagious Love,
Hag my aspiring Spirit, sink me down
To Woman's Shackles, make a Lap-thing of me?

Zaphna, remorseful, felt that he had been led:

To perpetrate an Act more black, more horrid
Than e'er the Sun cast Eye on, than e'er Tears
Can cleanse from its foul Stain, than e'er sweet Mercy
Can intercede for, or than Hell can punish.

The English author, then, stripped his characters of restraint; their feeling found vent in rhetoric.

But the similes and metaphors of Miller had often a better source than had the sentiments of Hill: Miller drew from nature

instead of from second-rate philosophy. He added such passages as:

But what's as pure as is the Western Gale
That breathes upon the uncropt Violet

or

Terror
Converting the sweet Flow'r of new-blown Hope
To deadly Night-shade,

or

Gloom
That like a blasting Millew on the Ear
Of promis'd Harvest, blackens o'er . . .

or

make old Age
Put on its Summer's Garb.

Uninspired as these figures may be, they have a simplicity that is refreshing amidst the false eloquence of mid-eighteenth century tragedy.

Miller, though, did not escape the pitfall of sentiments.¹³ sentiments which "sometimes appear like what we now-a-days term clap-traps."¹⁴ But these very "clap-traps," Adolphus believes, "must, . . . a century ago, have appealed strikingly and permanently to the feelings of the audience."

If their appeal was not enough Miller had other strings to his bow. He drew them with passages of the most intense emotion, with melodramatic stirrings of the old revenge motive, and with

¹³ "For when Confusion reigns, and Insurrection
With indiscriminating Fury stalks
Through ev'ry Street, what Mercy can be hop'd?
If thou dost think true Virtue is confin'd
To Climes or Systems; no, it flows spontaneous
Like Life's warm Stream throughout the whole Creation,
And beats the Pulse of ev'ry healthful Heart.

Peace, Reason, Peace!
Oft has our Prophet said, thy earth-sprung Dictates,
Like the bewild'ring Meteor of the Night,
Delude the Wretch who trusts their flatt'ring Shine."

He could moralize his end as well as Hill. Mahomet's last words were:

"Here let the mad enthusiast turn his eyes,
And see, from bigotry, what horrors rise.
Here, in the blackest colours, let him read,
That zeal, by craft misled, may act a deed
By which, both innocence and virtue bleed."

¹⁴ Adolphus, *Memoirs of Bannister*, p. 34.

tableaux of poignant suffering. Thus his heroine and hero struggled, the one crying:

Act not this bloody Deed; O save him, save him,

the other

Save him, and lose both Paradise and you,

the hero, breaking from her arms, started towards an altar, stopping short with the words,

Ha, what are ye, ye terrifying Shades?

What means this Lake of Blood that lies before me?

For revenge, take the same hero at another crisis:

Swift, swift, ye Hours, Celestial Charioteer,

Lash on thy Coursers, light me to Revenge!

Why linger for the Day? Flaming Revenge

Is Torch sufficient. Instantly I'll fly

Through ev'ry Street, rend with my bitter Cries

The Cypress Veil of Sleep; sound such a Trump

As might burst ope Death's Palace, and awake

His breathless Guards.

The most touching tableau was at the bier of Aleanor. On one side lay the body of his dead son; on the other reclined the figure of his dying daughter, uttering angelic forgiveness. It is to be remembered that all these assaults on the feelings—the high-pitched action, the cries for revenge, the tableau of the dead and dying—were the addition of the English adapters to a "fracas" which Voltaire had already, in its calmer form, called insupportable.

But the figures, sentiments, and feelings of the adapters of *Mahomet* were not the only English material in the play. To some extent it was a case of the return of the native. The prologue said:

Britons, these Numbers to yourselves you owe,

Voltaire hath Strength to shoot in Shakespeare's Bow:

Fame led him at his Hippocrene to drink,

And taught to write with Nature, as to think:

With English Freedom, English Wit he knew,

And from the inexhausted Stream profusely drew—

Cherish the noble Bard yourselves have made,

Nor let the Frauds of France steal all our Trade.

The "frauds of France" must be acquitted of any serious theft here. It is true, as Professor Lounsbury¹⁵ has shown, that there was a direct imitation of the murder of Duncan in *Macbeth* in the scenes surrounding the death of Alcanor;¹⁶ but the parallel was in the technique of rousing horror, not in the situation of the characters. Shakespeare's powerful scene, since it presented an off-stage murder, was peculiarly apt for imitation by the classical dramatist, and Voltaire, though he took over no lines directly, did not scruple to depict the same gamut of hesitation, fear, horror and remorse that Shakespeare had run.

The real theft at Shakespeare's Hippocrene first appeared in the English version of *Mahomet*. There, after the scene had been warped out of resemblance to its prototype in *Macbeth* by the love-making between the assassins, it was colored by many lines definitely suggested by Shakespeare. Before the event came these words:

Ye stern, relentless Ministers of Wrath,
Spirits of Vengeance . . .
 from this Breast
Banish the Stripling Pity . . .
Give me the Scorpion's Rage, the Basilisk's Eye,
That I may look, and look till I can murder.

and these:

Night, put on double Sable, that no Star
May be a Spy on these dark Deeds.

During it, Palmira told how

 the bloody Business is about.

After it Zaphna, returning, cried:

O whither fly! to whom?
D'ye see these Hands? Who will receive these Hands?

Later Palmira exhorted him:

 Think on't no more

¹⁵ *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, pp. 121ff.

¹⁶ In the extended pathos of the death of an aged man in these scenes there were also reminiscences of Lillo's *London Merchant*.

and he went on:

But I must think,

and further on, in agonized memory, said:

The Voice, the tender Looks, the bleeding Victim

Blessing his murderer, I cou'd not fly.

. . . What have we done?

There was no hint of such imitation in any of Voltaire's phrases.¹⁷

But though the English adapter dared the issue of the deadly parallel with Shakespeare, he disliked to take over from Voltaire one of the fundamental motives of the play. John Adolphus says,¹⁸ "there is a radical cause of dislike towards this tragedy which has ever prevailed and I trust and hope ever will prevail among us. The lovers, though they know it not, are brother and sister; and such a passion has always occasioned in our nation a feeling of disgust." The revelation of incest at the dénouement could not be avoided, unless the whole play were rewritten, but it could be glossed over. Miller, to that end, inserted lines written to forestall and soften any feeling of disgust. Thus at the first meeting of Zaphna and Palmira, in Act II, he made Zaphna say:

Thou Sov'reign of my Soul, and all its Power;

Object of ev'ry Fear and ev'ry Wish.

Friend, Sister, Love, Companion, all that's dear!

Again, in Act III, Palmira responded in the same tenor:

For, trust me, *Zaphna*, my Affection for thee

Is of that pure, disinterested Nature,

So free from Passion's Taint, I've no one Wish

To have thee more than thus; have thee my Friend.

Share thy lov'd Converse, wait upon thy Welfare,

And view thee with a Sister's spotless Eye.

¹⁷ *Mahomet*, in fact, had many echoes of standard English lines. In Act III, for instance, Zaphna spoke of

"the racking Thought

Of my near blunted Purpose."

which was not unlike the Ghost's reproach of Hamlet, while Mahomet, in the last act, felt the unseen power of virtue, as did Comus in the presence of the Lady.

"What Terror's this that hangs upon her Accents?

I feel her Virtue, tho' I know her Weakness."

¹⁸ *Memoirs of Bannister*, pp. 34ff.

Finally, in Act v. the dying Pahlira cried:

O, Zaphna, Brother,
 We burnt not with so criminal a Flame
 . . . When the Heart is pure,
 Small is the Difference, easy is the Change,
 A Lover's Passion for a Sister's Fondness.

If protesting their innocence would do it, these lovers would avoid giving any offense.

It was in the last act of the play, as usual, that the greatest changes came. It is difficult to say whether Miller or Hoadly is to be credited with them. According to dramatic historians and biographers, it was with this act that Hoadly took over the work of adaptation. But evidence of this change of hand is external, not internal. In diction and in method of adaptation the last act is of the same piece with the preceding ones, and Hoadly was either a reviser, or a remarkable collaborator, able to sink all color of his individuality, and take over the conception and manner of his predecessor with protean fidelity. Probably Miller carried his adaptation to its end, and in the words of the *Biographia Dramatica*¹⁹ "being unable to put the finishing hand to it . . . received some assistance in the completing of it from Dr. John Hoadly," that assistance being revision.

In any case, the last act stirred the waters of melodrama to a depth before which Voltaire would have shrunk. The tableau of the dead and dying has already been described. But it was the length of time which the pose was held in the English that was characteristic. These victims died hard. Cries of agony, blood, vengeance, on the stage, and uproar of "Shouts" and "Noise of Fighting" in the wings, marked their reluctant passing, and when that storm was over, and the thunder machines were quiet—for they too had been called into action—there was still the soul of Mahomet to damn. Now Voltaire gave him, to pay for his cold-blooded villainy, one brief passage of remorse:

*Il est donc des remords! ô fureur! ô justice!
 Mes forfaits dans mon cœur ont donc mis mon supplice!*

¹⁹ III, 7.

and left, him, no broken spirit, but still the calculating impostor:

*Cache au moins ma faiblesse, et salue encore ma gloire.
Je dois régir en dieu l'univers praveu;
Mon empire est détruit, si l'homme est reconnu!*

The English adaptation abandoned him to

... dwell with the Damn'd.
My Crimes have planted Scorpions in my Breast.
O Furies!
Here, here I feel ye—'Tis in vain to brave
The Host of Terrors that invade my Soul'

Mahomet " (*Turning to the Bodics*) " in tempestuous woe, cried:

Ye breathless Family
Let your loud-crying Wounds say
... what I am,
O snatch me from that Sight; quick, quick, transport me
To Nature's loneliest Mansion, where the Sun
Ne'er enter'd, where the Sound of Human Tread
Was never heard . . . But wherefore? Still I there,
There still shall find myself. Ay, that's
... the Hell!
I'll none on't.

He drew his sword, but it was wrested from him, and just before the final moral tag, he appealed to the angel of death to

Draw the kind Curtain of eternal Night
And shroud me from the Horrors that beset me,
O what a Curse is Life, when Self-Conviction
Flings our Offences hourly in our Face
And turns Existence Torturer to itself.

Melodrama aside, the last act of the English play was more satisfactory to conventional morality than that of the French. Voltaire left his audience in the face of a world where evil and good had combated without the issue for the good, or punishment for the evil. Miller, adding the death of Mahomet's accomplice and the damnation of Mahomet's soul to torture, had not so completely flouted ethical expectations.

It may be that the forest cannot be seen for the trees, in the changes that *Mahomet* underwent in being transferred to London, but after all, it was clearly an English forest. That the play's exposition was shortened, its declamation broken up, its style made figurative, impassioned, forced, full of moral sentiments, this was English. That it was made to use the "revenge" motive, to linger over tableaux of suffering, to soften the offense of the incestuous situation, to revel in melodrama, to make the *mêlée* more tumultuous, to assign sterner justice, this too was English. Here, in this English forest, the growth was less pruned and correct; there were deformities of moralization and violence, but there was also more verdure and a more vigorous, if uncontrolled life.

The energy and picturesqueness of the action, the native quality of the style, gave Garrick, certainly a judge of English taste, his "predilection" for *Mahomet*. It attracted other actors like Kemble, Macready, and Mrs. Siddons; and kept the play on the stage long after the mediocrity of its adapters would have forecast its disappearance. Because it was a free and a thoroughly English version, it took its place among the most successful of Voltaire's plays in England.

CHAPTER V

MURPHY AND VOLTAIRE

THE ORPHAN OF CHINA

Some men are made by their rivals. Among greater names, that of Arthur Murphy was not one to shine, but among the dramatists of the decades from 1750 to 1780, he could bear off the superlatives. Garrick knew his "actual merit," knew that he "possessed the tact of dramatic writing beyond all his contemporaries."¹ It was said that "Murphy will in time excell all his contemporaries, as he is now, to say the least in his favour, equal to the best of them,"² and that there was "no writer to whom the modern stage is under so many and so great obligations."³ But fortunate as he was in his rivals, he was as unfortunate in his temperament. He was a fiery, introspective, sensitive Celt. There never was a make-up less suited to the jealousies and petty frictions of theatrical life. Garrick had the art of handling men, yet, in connection with Murphy's adaptations from Voltaire, he was driven so far that he withdrew his "acquaintance" from Murphy, saying, "I assure you that it shall not ever incommode you for the future,"⁴ and later, when that breach had been healed, he was forced to cry "For God's sake, as you are a man of business, let us come to business; and for once lay aside your false delicacy."⁵ As for Murphy, he too suffered. He suffered until he publicly announced that he had "every reason to be disgusted at the internal occurrences of a theatre," and that it was probable that he should "never again be a candidate for Theatrical Fame."⁶ He didn't mean

¹ *Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, I, 66, note.

² *Monthly Review*, XX, 575.

³ *Critical Review*, XXXV, 229.

⁴ Garrick, *op. cit.*, I, 82.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 283. [A letter to Murphy from Garrick's brother, probably dictated by David.]

⁶ Advertisement, *Alzuma*; edition, 1773.

it, any more than Garrick meant to "withdraw his acquaintance." They were both Irish. But, even so, Murphy's life about the London theatres remained such a series of ups and downs as must have cost him heavy price in pain.

It is hard to say just when Murphy first grew interested in Voltaire's plays, but before he was through, he had adapted more of them for the English than any writer except Hill. He began with *The Orphan of China*, followed this with *No One's Enemy but His Own* and ended with *Alzuma*. Perhaps Hill's work directly suggested Murphy's. In March, 1755, Murphy played the part of Zamor in *Alzira* at Drury Lane, and at Mrs. Bellamy's request, altered several passages.⁷ The very next production by Voltaire, *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, brought out successfully at Paris in August of the same year, he took for his own. He was not, however, the first in the field. The play was published in French at London by Nourse in November,⁸ and reviewed, with a synopsis and passages of literal translation from the original, in the *Monthly Review* for December.⁹ In the same month an anonymous English translation was published by Baldwin in London.¹⁰ The *Gentleman's Magazine*¹¹ now printed the full fable of the play, with extracts to show the quality of the translation, while the *Monthly Review*,¹² in a lengthy article with excerpts, characterized it scathingly, comparing the translator to a Searron or a Cotton.¹³

Thus Murphy, who had his adaptation well under way in 1756,¹⁴ though he had a predecessor, ran no serious danger from him. But he did run danger from his temperament and from his manager. It was three years before those handicaps were overcome—three years, the history of which may be read in his

⁷ Genest, III, 423.

⁸ *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXV, 527. *Monthly Review*, XIII, 493.

⁹ XIII, 493ff.

¹⁰ *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXV, 575. *General Magazine*, VIII, 656.

¹¹ XXV, 545ff.

¹² XIV, 64ff.

¹³ *The Biographia Dramatica* (III, 106) corroborated this opinion, saying that this was a very hasty and indifferent translation.

¹⁴ On October 4, of that year, he wrote (Garrick, *op. cit.*, I, 70), that he did not see how he could cut down Garrick's rôle (Zamti).

correspondence with Garrick. First, there was jealousy. It was Murphy's idea that "Mr. Garrick's drift was to crush [his] endeavours in the bud,"¹⁵ and that already in October, 1756, when three acts of Murphy's adaptation were ready, "a writer"¹⁶ . . . was . . . actually employed, under the auspices of Mr. Garrick, in a translation of Voltaire's *Orphelin de la Chine*.¹⁷ Besides this cloud, which soon faded, he was cast into shadow by worry about the length of Garrick's rôle,¹⁷ about Garrick's giving up the part,¹⁸ and about the casting of all the characters, until he was involved with Garrick in a question which he himself called "highly unlucky, nice, and delicate."¹⁹ It was delicate enough to make Garrick withdraw his "acquaintance"²⁰ from Murphy, a step which reduced the author to humility again. Now, May 27, 1758,¹⁹ he hoped that the play would be given "either next season, or the season following, as shall be most agreeable to Mr. Garrick." It proved "most agreeable" to the manager to put it on at the end of the next season, April 21, 1759. In the interval Murphy wrote a series of wrangling letters,²¹ culminating in the complaint, on February 18:²² "Since the reading in the green-room, I have been in the case of the painter who put his piece in the window, to hear the opinions of the people, and continued retouching till not a feature remained."

All these difficulties, however, were behind the scenes. Before the curtain, in a letter to Voltaire from the "Author of the *Orphan of China*," dated London, April 30, 1759,²³ he said:

. . . if you had been present at the representation, you would have seen a theatrical splendour conducted with a *bien-séance* unknown to the *scène Française*; the performance of the two Young Men would have made you

¹⁵ Garrick, I, 520.

¹⁶ The suspected writer was probably John Hawkesworth (1716-1773). See Garrick, I, 81 and I, 112.

¹⁷ Garrick, I, 70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 71.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 87.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 82.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, 90, 96-98.

²² *Ibid.*, I, 99.

²³ Included in the first edition, 1759, of Murphy's play.

regret that they were not in your own piece . . . you would have beheld in *Mandane* a figure that would be an ornament to any stage in Europe . . . moreover, you would have seen a *Zamti*, whose exquisite powers are capable of adding Pathos and Harmony even to our great *Shakespeare*.

Thus, despite the many months of waiting,²⁴ Murphy was not too depressed to rise again to exultation.

Evidently this exultation was not without basis, for the excellence of the production and of the acting of Garrick (*Zamti*) and of Mrs. Yates (*Mandane*) became matters of theatrical record. There were "splendid assemblages of foreign dress";²⁵ "Garrick never perhaps, shewed his power . . . to more advantage,"²⁶ and his acting was "incomparable."²⁷ Mrs. Yates, "became immediately a favourite with the public";²⁸ she had "valuable merits."²⁹ Genest²⁸ has been almost the only luke-warm critic, with his comment, "a moderate tragedy," contradicted by the judgment from the *Biographia Dramatica*²⁹ that "*The Orphan of China* was far from standing the last on the list of our modern tragedies . . . indeed . . . were the whole play, or indeed even the last act of it, equal to the merit of the fourth, it would stand a very fair chance of being esteemed the very foremost on that list."

There was much to make Murphy happy, and little to distress him, in the magazines. By this time grown numerous, they were devoting more space to the theatres, and paid him liberal attention. The *Universal Magazine*³⁰ for May, 1759, printed twelve double-column pages, with the fable, the prologue and

²⁴ Professor Lonnbury, in *Shakespeare and Voltaire* (pp. 305-306), perhaps because of the delay in the production of Murphy's play, puts the *Orphan of China* among the adaptations of Voltaire that came after direct and immediate interest in his works had flagged. Yet within fourteen months after the first production in Paris there had been a French edition in London (published by Nourse), an anonymous translation (published by Baldwin), an adaptation in manuscript (Murphy), and another adaptation under way (Hawkesworth).

²⁵ Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, p. 79.

²⁶ Davies, *Life of David Garrick*, I, 217ff.

²⁷ Dibdin, *History of the Theatre*, v, 154.

²⁸ IV, 549ff.

²⁹ III, 106.

³⁰ XXIV, 245ff.

epilogue, and generous quotations from each act. The *London Magazine*³¹ gave six pages of the same sort of material; the *General Magazine*,³² four, and the *Gentleman's Magazine*,³³ the plot in full.³⁴ The *Monthly Review*,³⁵ for June, 1759, and the *Critical Review*³⁶ for May printed the fullest criticisms. The former said that the *Orphan of China* was "not a translation of Voltaire's celebrated *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, but rather a new English play, formed upon the Frenchman's model, with considerable improvements of the plan," and the latter said:

As the plot has become more European, it has become more perfect. By omitting many of the circumstances of the original story, and adding several of his own, Mr. Murphy has given us a play, if not truly Chinese, at least entirely poetical. . . . The first night the whole house seemed pleased, highly and justly pleased . . . the nervous sentiment, the glowing imagery, the well-conducted scenery, seemed the sources of their pleasure. . . . it was quickly seen, that all the faults of the performance proceeded from vicious imitation, and all its beauties were the poet's own.

The play's run of nine nights in the spring of 1759 was "less success than it deserved," thought the *Critical Review*,³⁷ and was no longer because the season was too near its close—"the warm weather and the performer's benefits were set in." Its later career was prosperous, and lasted until 1810.³⁸ In 1760 it was repeated at Drury Lane and given at Smock Alley in Dublin. In the season of 1760-1761 it was the medium of "the greatest piece of generalship exhibited throughout the whole contest"³⁹ between the Dublin theatres in Smock Alley and Crow Street. At Crow Street the announcement was made with great parade "that the play was to be produced with pomp and mag-

³¹ XXVIII, 264ff.

³² XII, 231ff.

³³ XXIX, 218ff.

³⁴ The prologue and epilogue were printed in the *General Magazine* (XII, 243), and, in later years, in *Victor's Original Letters, Dramatic Pieces, and Poems* (III, 71) and in *The Theatrical Bouquet* (pp. 58 and 229).

³⁵ XX, 575.

³⁶ VII, 434ff.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 434ff.

³⁸ Professor Lounsbury (*Shakespeare and Voltaire*, pp. 305-306) includes the *Orphan of China* in a group of which he says: "None of these pieces had much success, none outlived their first season."

³⁹ Genest, x, 450ff.

nificence equal to that of Drury Lane." At Smock Alley, in entire secrecy, a production was prepared, the actors rehearsing three times a day and the tailor working night and day. A five-day march was stolen on the opposition, and the public curiosity, roused by the Crow Street advertisement, was turned to the benefit of the Smock Alley actors. The play was given at Drury Lane in 1764, 1765, 1766, 1767, and 1794; at Covent Garden in 1777;⁴⁰ at Philadelphia in 1767, 1770, 1789, and 1791; at Dublin in 1767, 1772, and 1810; at New York in 1768 and 1779; in Jamaica in 1781; at Dover in 1786; and at York in 1788. Garrick did not appear as Zamti after the first season; Mossop, Barry, Holland, Ross, and Holman were among his successors.

The original of the play which London and the provinces thus supported was another of Voltaire's typical tragedies. The first ingredient in these dramas was a remote background; the next, a set of elevated characters; the third, a heart-rending conflict in the breast of one unfortunate. Add a spice of mystery and ignorance, and the mixture was complete. The action of *L'Orphelin de la Chine* took place in China, involving the heir to the throne and the usurping Tartar conqueror, plunging the mother of an infant substituted for the orphan heir into the struggle between mother-love and patriotism. The puzzle of the changelings and the love of the conqueror for the mother added the necessary turns of complication.

Murphy's letter to Voltaire in the 1759 edition of the *Orphan of China* contained the motives of his changes. He found the French play a descent from a "tumult of the passions" in the early acts to cold narrative and conventional love making in the later scenes; he felt a "scantiness of interesting business," and a lack of concern about the destiny of a babe, who "might die, sir, in cutting his teeth, of the whooping cough, or any of the disorders attendant on that tender age." In his work the "tumult of passions" was to be maintained; "interesting business" to be added; the infants were to be grown men; the lover

⁴⁰ Murphy made some alterations for this revival, but the success of the play was not equal to that of its first appearance.

a tyrant and conqueror: all to the end that "many situations might arise, in which some of the nearest affections of the heart might be awakened."⁴¹

To read Murphy's letter, one would believe that Voltaire's play did little more than suggest a subject to him. An old Chinese play, the reader was led to think, provided the material both to him and Voltaire. This material Murphy had discovered before he ever heard of Voltaire's play—when that appeared he read it, saw flaws in it, and wrote his own play, in which there might be a few echoes of Voltaire's sentiments, but no closer ties. He reproached Voltaire for abusing Shakespeare in his preface and then stealing from him in his play; and then went and did likewise to Voltaire. For there is no doubt that the French text was at his elbow; there were too many traces of Voltaire's snow, to turn Murphy's phrase against himself, to be dismissed as "a few sentiments."⁴²

⁴¹ This letter to Voltaire (April 30, 1759), which was not without strictures on the French dramatist, was noted by most of the magazines, and condemned by the *Critical Review* (vii, 437) as ungrateful in one who had adapted Voltaire's material. There appeared post haste, in time to be reviewed by the May magazines (*Gentleman's Magazine*, xxix, 232; *Scot's Magazine*, xxi, 280; *London Magazine*, xxviii, 280), "A letter from M. Voltaire to the author of the *Orphan in China*," published by Pott-inger. The *Gentleman's Magazine* (xxix, 232) exposed it as written by some impostor "under the influence of personal ill-will" to Murphy. The *Monthly Review* for June (xx, 566), called its author "some envious or malicious Grubbean of our country." A synopsis of the Letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (xxix, 232-233) shows that it was an array of superficial points, not responding to any of the main issues in Murphy's letter to Voltaire.

⁴² Besides the continuous parallelism of action and motive, there were innumerable phrases and passages of translation: e.g., the following from Act I:

"palais sanglant" became "palace drenched in gore,"
 "nouvelles douleurs" became "fresh cause of bitter anguish,"
 "Et qui n'éprouve, hélas! dans la porte commune,
 Les tristes sentiments de sa propre infortune?"

became

"Amidst the gen'ral wreck, who does not feel
 The keen domestic pang."

"Qui de nous vers le ciel n'élève pas ses cris
 Pour les jours d'un époux, ou d'un père, ou d'un fils?"

became

"daily the cries
 Of widows, orphans, father, son, and brother
 In vain are sent to heav'n."

The sentiments were there, of course. Any author, who knew "the tact of dramatic writing" in the middle of the eighteenth century, was a moralist, and Murphy's play was full of what "we would now-a-days call claptraps." The final curtain, for instance, was characteristically marked. In Voltaire's play, after Gengiskan (Timurkan) had finished his speech of forgiveness, Mandane asked:

Qui peut vous inspirer ce dessein?

and he answered:

Tos vertus.

Such a close would be "a hundred times more effective than a useless peroration" wrote Voltaire to d'Argental.⁴³ The peroration appeared in Murphy's play:

To thee a grateful monument shall rise,
With all sepulchral honour—frequent there
We'll offer incense:—there each weeping muse
Shall grave the tributary verse;—with tears
Embalm their memories; and teach mankind,
Howe'r Oppression stalk the groaning earth,
Yet heav'n, in its own hour, can bring relief.
Can blast the tyrant in his guilty pride,
And prove the orphan's guardian to the last.

But to keep his play from lapsing, in its later acts, into cold narrative, was Murphy's primary aim. To maintain the "tumult of the passions" he suppressed the "rôle pour l'amoureux" of Gengiskan (Timurkan), which had struck him as chill and conventional, and substituted, for the discussion of politics of which he complained in Voltaire, battle, murder and sudden death. In the impassioned style of his relation of these woes there were sparks from the fire of Elizabethan tragedy—Tamburlaine and Richard are not far distant when Timurkan cries:

"la horde hyperborée"

became

"the iron swarms of Hyperboreans."

The awe and respect that Zamti was said to obtain from the Tartars was described alike in the French and English.

⁴³ *Oeuvres*, v, 356, quoted.

... the dawn
 Shall see me up in arms. 'gainst Corea's chief
 I will unfurl my banners—his proud cities
 Shall dread my thunder at their gates, and mourn
 Their smoaking ramparts—o'er his verdant plains
 And peaceful dales I'll drive my warlike carr,
 And deluge all the east with blood.

OR

These midnight visions shake my inmost soul.
 ... they've made
 Such desolation here—'tis drear and horrible!—
 On yonder couch, soon as sleep clos'd my eyes,
 All . . . rose to my view;
 And ever and anon a livid flash,
 From conscience shot, shew'd to my aching sight
 The colors of my guilt—
 Billows of blood were round me; and the ghosts,
 The ghosts of heroes, by my rage destroy'd,
 Came with their ghastly orbs, and streaming wounds;
 They stalk'd around my bed;—with loud acclaim
 They called Zaphimri! 'midst the lightning's blaze
 Heav'n rolled consenting thunders o'er my head;
 Strait from his covert the youth sprung upon me,
 And shook his gleaming steel—he hurl'd me down,
 Down headlong, down the drear—hold, hold! where am I?
 Oh! this dire whirl of thought—my brain's on fire.

This tragic style, though, was only a medium. "Interesting business" was the stuff of which the scenes were made. So the stage was crowded, often with spectacle and tableau,⁴⁴ always with oratorical sufferers,⁴⁵ The action was full of embracings,⁴⁶ faintings,⁴⁷ kneelings,⁴⁸ tears;⁴⁹ it knew the sound⁵⁰ of groans.

⁴⁴ Entrance of Timurkan, p. 22; The place of tombs, p. 35; Zaphimri prone, p. 72; Zaphimri before Timurkan, p. 80; Mandane dead, p. 84.

⁴⁵ New characters: Etan and Hamet; Morat and Mirvan.

⁴⁶ Zamti-Morat, p. 16; Mandane-Zamti, p. 34; Zaphimri-Zamti, p. 43; Mandane-Octar, p. 46; Mandane-Hamet, p. 47; Zamti-Zaphimri, p. 50; Mandane "one last embrace," p. 52.

⁴⁷ Mandane into Zamti's arms, p. 34; Mandane-Hamet, p. 48; Zamti, p. 85.

⁴⁸ Mandane-Zamti, p. 7; Zamti-Morat, pp. 18-19; Hamet-Zamti, p. 28; Mandane-Zamti, p. 32; All kneel to Zaphimri, p. 40; Mandane-Octar, p. 46; Hamet, p. 49; Hamet-Zamti, p. 50; Hamet, p. 53; Zaphimri, pp. 69, 71; Zamti pp. 85-86.

⁴⁹ Zamti, pp. 16, 19, 30; Zaphimri, p. 56.

⁵⁰ Warlike music within, p. 20; A second flourish, p. 21; A groan, p. 35; A dead march, p. 44; Flourish of trumpets, p. 60

trumpets, dead-marches, and shrieks of the tortured. The setting was in keeping. In figures of speech, the thunder rolled and the lightning struck in imagined concert with the deeds of these violent-handed men, and the flames flared to illumine their bad acts. In actual scenery there was "*A Temple*," with "*Several tombs up and down the stage*"—

... long winding isles,
 ... solemn arches, whose religious awe
 Attunes the mind to melancholy musing.

These very vaults shared the passions of the actors.

Each step 1 move
 A deeper horror sits on all the tombs;
 Each shrine,—each altar seems to shake: as if
 Conscious of some important crisis.

Finally, that the orphan might be a hero, not a piece of stage property, that he might have an active, not a passive rôle, he gained a man's estate, his infancy, the present in Voltaire, was recounted as of the past—"Far hence, Mandane, those happy days"—and he became the instrument of vengeance on the tyrant Timurkan. This change shifted the rôles, motives, and final effect of the play. The part of the orphan grew important, the mother was no longer the object of the conqueror's passion, and that conqueror became tyrant instead of lover. The motive of revenge came to the fore,⁵¹ and the dénouement gave the play the effect of a bloody tragedy of circumstance. Timurkan no longer repented; instead he cried:

Drag forth these slaves to instant death and torment.
 I hate this dull delay; I burn to see them
 Gasping in death, and welt'ring in their gore.

⁵¹ In Mandane's invocation:

"Goddess of vengeance, from your realms above,
 Where near the throne of the Most High thou dwell'st,
 Inspir'd in darkness, amidst hoards of thunder,
 Serenely dreadful, 'till dire human crimes
 Provoke thee down; now, on the whirlwind's wing
 Descend, and with your flaming sword, your bolts
 Red with almighty wrath, let loose your rage,
 And blast this vile seducer in his guilt."

His victims died, but he did not survive them. He fell in single combat with the orphan hero, a last active result of making the orphan man instead of infant.

Murphy then, brought up in the same school of tragedy as Hill and Miller, unchecked by close imitation of his source, gave free rein to his tastes. With a strong, if melodramatic enthusiasm, he saw to it that exaggeration should never yield to simplicity: that "business" should never flag, that many situations should arise "in which some of the nearest affections of the heart might be awakened." However dusty the rhetoric today, however unreal the bustle of the action, however unstirred the emotions, the play in its period attracted able actors, satisfied average critics, and drew audiences for many seasons. With Hill's *Zara* and Miller's *Mahomet* it was one of the most frequently performed and most sturdily surviving of the adaptations of Voltaire. Like those plays, it had energy and independence: like them it appealed to the taste of the time. "The whole," said the *Critical Review* for May, 1759,⁵² was "in action, filled with incident, embellished with a justice of sentiment," showing "strength of thought, propriety of diction, and a perfect acquaintance with the stage."

NO ONE'S ENEMY BUT HIS OWN

The course of Murphy's adaptations never did run smooth. His *Orphan of China* drifted three years before it reached the stage. His *Alzuma* fell into the eddies and backwaters of theatrical jealousies, and floated there for eleven years before it was rescued. When his comedy, *No One's Enemy but His Own*, two years later than *Alzuma* in composition, was produced long before that tragedy, it passed quickly through the shoals of the managers, only to be badly damaged on the rocks of the critics.

This troublesome business of adaptation and production occupied much of Murphy's time from 1756 to 1764. He was at work on the *Orphan of China* in 1756; he finished *Alzuma* in 1762; he brought out *No One's Enemy but His Own* in 1764.

⁵² VII, 434ff.

But only the first adaptation was of a play just produced in Paris. *Alzuma* drew from various sources, and *No One's Enemy but His Own* came from *L'Indiscret*, a slight humor comedy that had appeared in Paris long since, in 1725, as an afterpiece to *Mariamne*. It had remained untouched, a youthful and tentative sketch, until Voltaire gave it a few corrections in 1752. Then, ten years later, a translation had appeared in England, under the title of *The Babbler*, in volume 4 of Smollett and Franklin's edition⁵³ of the dramatic works of Voltaire.

Murphy's play was an expansion of *L'Indiscret* into a full length, three act comedy—a "French watch" converted into "an English jack."⁵⁴ Its first night was January 9, 1764, at Covent Garden, with Woodward as Careless, Shuter as Sir Philip, and a representative group of the company at that theatre in the cast. It was given four times, the fourth and last being January 19, when it was ordered "to be acted the Night the King and Queen, with the Prince and Princess of Brunswick,"⁵⁵ were at Covent Garden. Revived at the same theatre ten years later, on October 26, 1774, it was acted about six times. It turned up in America on January 19, 1778, where it opened the season of "Howe's Thespians" at the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia, and on May 19, 1797, thirty-three years after its first appearance in England, it was produced in New York.

Though it happened to be played at such long intervals, it did not approach the popularity of the *Orphan of China*. Its smooth sailing ended with its production; thereafter it suffered at the hands of the critics, and had only sporadic performances. It "was said that Party interfered to condemn [it] very undeservedly,"⁵⁶ and it is sure that criticism was irritated and harsh. First, the title was attacked.

Thou'rt an honest fellow, Careless, and no one's enemy but your own,
was the line that gave the name to the piece. The *Gentleman's*

⁵³ See pp. 93-94.

⁵⁴ *Royal Magazine*, x, 28; *London Magazine*, xxxiii, 36.

⁵⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine*, xxxiv, 22, January, 1764.

⁵⁶ Victor, *History of the Theatres of London*, iii, 66.

Magazine for January, 1764,⁵⁷ delivered a very sober tirade on "the evil of giving such a name to a character [who tells] all whose ears he can reach, a secret which every man of honour would hold dearer than life." The *Universal Magazine*⁵⁸ printed a series of rhetorical questions, ending:

Is the man who, in violation of every human tie, and religious obligation, bursts through the laws of honour and hospitality, and attempts to debauch the wife of his friend—no one's enemy but his own? . . . If such a man is not Every body's enemy, we really wonder who is.

The *Royal Magazine*⁵⁹ made much the same comment, and this point of view found its way into the histories of Dibdin⁶⁰ and Genest.⁶¹ The critic of the *Universal Magazine*⁵⁸ even went so far as to attribute the failure of the play to this one flaw. In all his vicissitudes Careless never fell into such sorry plight as he did among these moralists. Theirs was a heavy, orthodox, absolutely unappreciative point of view. The piece was evil. They could not see that nothing in it was meant seriously, that no harm came to any one, that it simply laughed at the humours of men, exposed their vanities by pushing them into ridiculous situations. No! Careless had given away "a secret which every man of honour would hold dearer than life," and he was thereafter simply damned, not for what he had done, but for telling of it. If Lamb's *Essay on Restoration Comedy* had been written by 1764, perhaps this note would not have seemed a beam in the eye of English moral criticism.

The morality of the title was not the only aspect of the piece which came in for severe handling. It sinned against conventionality as well as morality; the Puritan waxed punctilious. "The character of *Talkative Indiscretion* is carried too far," said the *Gentleman's Magazine*,⁶² "a thoughtless debauchée [sic] may naturally enough tell the secrets of his pleasure to his comrades, yet a gentleman would scarce make confidants of his barber

⁵⁷ XXXIV, 22.

⁵⁸ XXXIV, 39.

⁵⁹ X, 28.

⁶⁰ V, 251.

⁶¹ V, 53ff.

⁶² XXXIV, 22.

and taylor." Finally its close was as offensive as its beginning. The *Gentleman's Magazine*⁶³ quoted the final speech of Careless, to show that the evil blight had spread over the whole play, and the *Universal Magazine*⁶⁴ remarked that "Wisely, who is rewarded at the end of the piece for being an honest man, ought to be tossed in a blanket."

When it came to literary instead of moral criticisms, the plot was found "wire-drawn"⁶⁵ and "insipid,"⁶⁶ the situation of the characters "not sufficiently interesting";⁶⁶ but the dialogue "spirited, . . . well-supported, properly characterized,"⁶⁶ "easy and flowing, not void of wit and pleasantry."⁶⁷ The play as a whole was admitted by the *Gentleman's Magazine*,⁶⁸ which had led the moral attack, to have "its merit"; the *Monthly Review*⁶⁹ conceded that it was "not wholly destitute of comic humour," and Genest,⁷⁰ in later years, called it "a pretty good comedy."⁷¹

Though the prologue⁷² made no concealment of the model on which the play was formed, Murphy's indebtedness to Voltaire was not everywhere noticed, and the suggestion was made⁷³ that Congreve had been his master, and that⁷⁴ Marplot, Daffodil, and Sir Philip Morelove were the models for Careless and Figurein.

The freedom of the adaptation made such a suggestion pos-

⁶³ XXXIV, 22.

⁶⁴ XXXIV, 39.

⁶⁵ *Royal Magazine*, x, 28; *London Magazine*, XXXIII, 36.

⁶⁶ *Critical Review*, XVII, 49; *Scot's Magazine*, XXVI, 217.

⁶⁷ *Royal Magazine*, x, 31.

⁶⁸ XXXIV, 39.

⁶⁹ XXX, 70.

⁷⁰ v, 54.

⁷¹ Space was also given to the epilogue, or prologue, or both, by the *Universal Magazine*, XXXIV, 45; *Royal Magazine*, x, 46; *Court and City Magazine*, v, 644; *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXIV, 40; *London Magazine*, XXXIII, 46; and the *Theatrical Bouquet*, 1780.

⁷² "Around his bark, in many a dang'rous shoal,
Those monsters of the deep, the critics, prowl.
'She's a weak vessel, for these seas unfit,
And has on board her not a spice of wit;
She's French-built too: of foreign make,' they cry;
Like geese still cackling that the Gauls are nigh."

⁷³ *Critical Review*, XVII, 49; *Scot's Magazine*, XXVI, 217.

⁷⁴ *Universal Magazine*, XXXIV, 39.

sible. *No One's Enemy but His Own* was a mosaic of old and new, in which there were more blocks of new than of old. Murphy did not alter the action: he simply inserted large sections of fresh material, elongating rather than shifting the intrigue. Voltaire's piece was finely spun, delicate, advancing rapidly through shifting, lightly touched scenes, playing on this humour and on that, but never lingering overlong. There was almost a nervous haste in the briskness and brevity of its action, in which one comic scene telescoped another. Murphy's work was fuller, heavier, with a much longer dwelling on the humours of character or the ironies of circumstance. It substituted thoroughness for Gallic lightness. A sketch, made with quick, thin, sharp strokes, each firmly done, and the whole in clearest outline, became a full picture, with broader, vaguer lines, done in the same scheme as the original, but losing its clearly etched outline.

Even when Murphy's scenes followed a course already traced, he was not slavish in his translation. For instance, he rendered:

*J'arrêtais . . . le cours d'une rivière,
Un cerf dans une plaine, un oiseau dans les airs,
Un poète entêté qui récite ses vers,
Une plaideuse en feu qui crie l'injustice,
Un Manceau tonsuré qui court au bénéfice,
La tempête, le vent, le tonnerre et ses coups,*

by

To stop the course of a river, or a bird in the air, or a lawyer at Westminster, or thunder and lightning, or a poet repeating his own verses, or a critic abusing them.

He caught the spirit of a passage, and transferred it into English by a translation of that spirit, not of the words. Likewise to catch the quality of a character and preserve it through new action was a virtue of his adaptation. Careless, for instance, carried over into scenes invented by Murphy, paraded there the same self-satisfaction, the same strutting egotism which Voltaire gave him: there was no break in the rôle.

But the "French watch" was made into an "English jack," largely through scenes of Murphy's own invention. By new setting, new dialogue, and new characters he so domesticated his

comedy that the critics did not cackle that the Gauls were nigh. The setting, first, he made thoroughly native and contemporary. There was talk about Ranelagh, Sunning-Hill, Wiltshire, Chancery, Salisbury, Winchester, Southampton, Berkshire, the School at Stockbridge, the Long Room at Hampstead, the Mitre Tavern in Fleet Street, or the Thatch'd House. Names like Sir William, Lucinda, Captain Wimble, Jack Tattle, and Lady Betty Gabble took the place of Erminie, Valère, and Horace. The foibles of the age were described quite as they were to be later in *The School for Scandal*:

Ridicule and raillery are the taste of the age; every one you meet is a pleasant fellow; he has picked up a character, an incident, a story, a damn'd high story, and so a friend is sacrificed to the sport of the next company.

English plays were referred to, with names like Worthless, Morelove, Ranger and Dorimant, and phrases like "I hated him for an impostor, more than Maria does Dr. Wolfe in the Non-Juror."

The dialogue, partly adapted, largely created, the one feature of the play that pleased the critics, was Murphy's worthiest addition, and was thoroughly native by virtue of its resemblance to the manner of Congreve.⁷⁵ Lucinda and Bellfield came straight from the school of feeling; theirs was a highly elaborated "discours de sentiment," always figurative,⁷⁶ often euphuistic,⁷⁷ making up for lack of action by brilliancy of

⁷⁵ The *Scot's Magazine*, xxvi, 217, said that the lack of sufficient interest in the situations of the characters was due to "Congreve's example."

⁷⁶ The figures were played on for speech after speech. For instance, "force of arms" was followed by phrases using "general," "capitulate," "carry by storm," "garrison," "citadel," and "artillery"; or "condemned" was succeeded by "outlawed for rebellion," "judgment of death," and "pardon"; or the phrases of hunting were pursued: "Another of your wild flights now—why, you mount like a pheasant—whur!" "And do you vainly hope to bring me down?" "The gun of wit may reach you.—Take care." "But the laws of Parnassus for the preservation of the game don't allow such as you to shoot flying." "I am perfectly in a wood here." The effect was one of continuous, almost coherent repartée, the virtue of which was richness, the vice a studied artificiality.

⁷⁷ There was euphuism in such lines as these descriptive of a beautiful woman, "a sort of mosaic work, where folly is inlaid with talents, a love of pleasure with virtue, a power of pleasing with a delight in giving pain."

repartée. Lucinda led her lover a merry dance, racked him with "wildness" and "extravagance of spirits," until he cried: "You may as well fix quicksilver as a woman's mind." If her fondness for self-examination, that resource of the idle women of the eighteenth century, grew heavy, it yielded soon to lively comedy. Altogether the dialogue was worthy of the critics' praise: it was "spirited . . . easy . . . flowing"; it inherited some of the spirit and technique of the most brilliant conversation in English drama, that of Restoration comedy.

"Upon my soul, Lucinda, you have a very pretty group of humourists," said Bellfield. "Enough to furnish out a comedy," admitted Lucinda. Murphy, to furnish out his comedy, created these two, added a barber, a tailor, and his most original character, Sir Philip Figuerin.⁷⁸ If his dialogue came from the Restoration, these characters sprang from Jonson's line. "What an absurd passion has possess'd Sir Philip!": "with one foot in the grave, he dances about the world, as if he was bit by a tarantula": "dancing is his ruling passion": "not a single idea but what is derived from dancing. If you ask him what sort of a place such a town is, 'They have a very good Monday-night assembly.' Or, if you desire to know what kind of people, 'They very often dance thirty couple.'" Sir Philip entered "with St. Vitus strong upon him" and recounted his exploits on the dancing floor. His "humour" was in full control; he spoke to the accompaniment of minuet steps, risings and sinkings, and humming of dance tunes. He "who dances three thousand miles a year," leaving his family in misery, turning out his toes, said, that gambling, to which his wife was addicted, was "the worst passion in the world." To the last his humour ruled. He still danced, while he said, "I was never so disconcerted in my born days," he "sinks and rises" behind the curtain, "in a minuet step" he ordered Careless never to enter his house again, and

⁷⁸ The *Monthly Review* (xxx, 70) said of him, that the play might boast "at least one new character"; the *Critical Review* (xvii, 49) and the *Scot's Magazine* (xxvi, 217) also called him "original," but the *Universal Magazine* (xxxiv, 39) called him "nothing but Sir Philip More-love, reduced to the level of a dancing-master."

he disappeared from the stage, inviting his hearers to sacrifice to the graces with him, and saying that he had "known them dance fifty couples at the Norwich assembly."

The modern reader, feeling so much more reality in this comedy than in tragedies from Voltaire that had greater success, would be apt to feel that "Party" or other prejudice interfered "undeservedly" with its career. He would catch the sureness and variety of Murphy's comic method with its resourceful use of eavesdropping, double-meaning, reversal, ironic echo, mistaken identity, surprise, confusion, and double surprise. He would feel that Murphy had preserved something of the spirit of the original, though its Gallic quickness, its artificial brilliancy, were beyond his grasp. He would see how to the sprightly turns of the French plot Murphy had added an English atmosphere, scenes of dialogue conceived in the spirit, though not with the power of Congreve, and scenes of men in the humours drawn in the manner, though not with the genius of Jonson. Perhaps he must conclude that the change in the methods of comedy since the eighteenth century, slighter than that in the methods of tragedy, places a false relative value on the comedies of that time, or perhaps that the hybrid nature of *No One's Enemy but His Own* cost it success.

ALZUMA

Alzuma's eleven years of suspense meant more than vexation to Murphy. When he wrote the play in 1762, the British had just besieged and captured Havana, the center of Spanish trade in America, and its contrast of Spanish oppression with American virtue had a timely appeal.⁷⁹ When it was presented, in 1773, its motive was no longer seasonable; the question arose: "whether it be required in time of peace, that an odium should be cast on the Spanish nation for acts that have been long execrated among themselves."⁸⁰ At whose door to lay the blame

⁷⁹ This was not a new story in Europe, for Dryden had told it in *The Indian Emperor* (1665), and Voltaire had retold it in *Alzire* (1736). Murphy had acted in Aaron Hill's adaptation of *Alzire* (1736), and was therefore familiar with the theme.

⁸⁰ *Universal Magazine*, LII, 139, March, 1773.

for the delay is in doubt; Garrick's side of the story is in his correspondence; Murphy's is there⁸¹ also and in the Advertisement of the 1773 edition. There was a series of altercations over large and small points, of wrong after wrong fancied by Murphy and explained by Garrick, the record of an oversensitive author in the hands of a practical manager. It was here that Garrick said, through his brother, "For God's sake, as you are a man of business, let us come to business; and for once lay aside your false delicacy."⁸² It was here that Murphy, saying that he had "every reason to be disgusted at the internal occurrences of a theatre,"⁸³ withdrew in a temporary pique from the candidates for "Theatrical Fame."

The upshot of the whole quibbling and backbiting affair was that Murphy turned from Garrick; enlisted Colman's interest; won his acceptance of the play, and its production at Covent Garden on February 23, 1773.⁸⁴ Though, in his last letter to Garrick on the subject,⁸⁵ January 13, 1773, he ended "[I] must take leave to think myself a competent judge of my own concerns," it is a question if his judgment in abandoning Garrick was sound, for the Covent Garden production was by no means the equal of Garrick's Drury Lane production of the *Orphan of China*. The actors were only of fair ability; stock scenery was used, and the costuming was not intelligent.

Murphy, of course, paid the actors the usual conventional tribute in his Advertisement; the *Monthly Review*⁸⁶ said they deserved his thanks; and the *Evening Post*⁸⁷ thought the play well performed; but Murphy admitted that one actress "struggled . . . in illness," the *Monthly Review* found one performer "improperly placed," another "not old enough for the . . .

⁸¹ The letters that touch *Alzuma* in Garrick are to be found in volume 1, upon pp. 224, 241-245, 280-283, 290, 291, 302-306, 329, 367, 395, 396, 460, 503, 512, 513, 516, 517, 519.

⁸² Garrick, I, 283.

⁸³ Advertisement, *Alzuma*; edition 1773.

⁸⁴ *Alzuma*, by chance, immediately preceded the first night of *She Stoops to Conquer*.

⁸⁵ Garrick, I, 519.

⁸⁶ XLVIII, 214.

⁸⁷ XXXII, 190.

part," and another "not quite what might be looked for," while the *Chronicle*⁸⁸ spoke of "two inferior Actresses," and the *Town and Country Magazine*⁸⁹ said that the play "did not go off with the applause which the friends of the author had expected, owing, in some degree, to many of the parts being but indifferently performed."

Colman did not do much better with the staging than with the acting. "There was no new scene, unless the representation of an altar can be called one,"⁹⁰ and though the dresses were "uncommonly rich and elegant,"⁹⁰ the finest clothes were absurdly lavished on the principal actors, regardless of what the rôles demanded.⁹¹

Whether the cause lay in the play itself or in the inferior production, *Alzuma* had a limited run. It was given for nine nights in 1773 and was not presented after that season, though in its printed form it went through three editions in 1773, was included in a collection of new plays in 1774, and in Murphy's *Dramatic works* in 1786.⁹²

Yet criticisms of the play were unusually favorable. Its plot,⁹³ its sentiments,⁹⁴ and its language,⁹⁵ were generously praised. The only objections to the plot were that "the author had sacrificed the regular course of nature to his passion for striking incidents and fine situations,"⁹⁶ and that the scenes had an "irregularity of merit."⁹⁷ To the sentiments there were no objections, they were "exalted,"⁹⁸ "liberal and noble"⁹⁹ and "so

⁸⁸ XXXIII, 191.

⁸⁹ v, 129.

⁹⁰ *Evening Post*, XXXII, 190.

⁹¹ *Monthly Review*, XLVIII, 213.

⁹² The prologue and epilogue were printed in the *Town and Country Magazine*, v, 129; *Gentleman's Magazine*, XLIII, 144; and *Westminster Magazine*, XXXVIII, 215.

⁹³ *Critical Review*, XXXV, 229; *Town and Country Magazine*, v, 129; *Monthly Review*, XLVIII, 213; *Evening Post*, XXXII, 190.

⁹⁴ *Critical Review*, XXXV, 229; *Town and Country Magazine*, v, 129; *Monthly Review*, XLVIII, 213.

⁹⁵ *Critical Review*, XXXV, 229.

⁹⁶ *Westminster Magazine*, XXXVIII, 215.

⁹⁷ *Evening Post*, XXXII, 190.

⁹⁸ *Critical Review*, XXXV, 229.

⁹⁹ *Town and Country Magazine*, v, 129.

well chosen that they never [failed] producing a great clap."¹⁰⁰ As to the language, it was "poetical in no common degree,"¹⁰¹ "correct, and cold, above the level of prose, yet not quite reaching that of true poetry,"¹⁰² and capable of offending only one critic.¹⁰³ The stage of the day was said to be under the greatest obligations to Murphy,¹⁰⁴ and *Alzuma* to have merit enough, if judiciously cut, to hold its ground as a stock piece.¹⁰⁵

These criticisms read like those of an original piece. Murphy, in fact, in his Advertisement, tried to avoid any charges of plagiarism. He wrote that:

His first design was to new mould the *Alzira* of Voltaire. . . . That plan, however, was soon deserted: it occurred, that if this author followed the steps of Monsieur de Voltaire, the words "French Translator," "Unblushing Plagiary," would fill the columns of every newspaper. To civilities of this kind the author has been used. If the persons who have been so liberal, feel themselves disposed to lavish their favours on the present occasion, they will perhaps be glad of a hint, that may supply ample materials. If they will look into the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, they will perceive in what school the author of *Alzuma* has studied the art of constructing a fable.

The truth is, that the author protested too much, and was very near being the "Unblushing Plagiary," he denied. It needs but one reading of *Alzuma* to see that it owed much more to the *Alzira* of Voltaire, here brushed aside, and to the *Oreste* of the same writer, here unmentioned, than to any work of the school of Sophocles or Euripides. Add one scene from *Merope*, and there may be found in these three plays of the French dramatist a source for the setting, the action, the characters, and the motives of *Alzuma*.

The Peruvian setting came from *Alzira*, with some local details reminiscent of *Oreste*; the action was a recombination of episodes from all three French plays,¹⁰⁶ the characters, motley as

¹⁰⁰ *Monthly Review*, XLVIII, 213.

¹⁰¹ *Critical Review*, XXXV, 229.

¹⁰² *Evening Post*, XXXII, 190.

¹⁰³ Acts I, II, IV and V from *Oreste* and *Alzira*. Act III from *Oreste* and *Alzira*, except for the central episode, Orazia's recognition of the victim she is about to kill as her son—which is also a central episode in *Merope*.

their ancestry was, and intricate as their relations were, descended from the same sources.¹⁰⁴ Finally the two motives, the clash between Spaniard and American, and the vengeance of a son for the evils done his father, came from *Alzire* and from *Oreste*.

There is every indication that Murphy was familiar with these plays. When he composed *Alzuma*, in 1762, he was in the midst of a period of active adaptation from Voltaire.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, he had acted in Hill's adaptation of *Alzire*.¹⁰⁶ he was familiar with the theatres of the time, an adaptation of *Merope*¹⁰⁷ had recently been played and a translation of *Oreste*¹⁰⁸ had recently appeared in London. Thus there was at hand an English as well as a French version of each of his three models.

Yet the columns of the newspapers, with the exception of the *Critical Review*,¹⁰⁹ which said that "a French Model" was used, were not filled with the words "French Translator" or "Unblushing Plagiary." Perhaps there was some justice in this, for Murphy was not, in *Alzuma*, a translator,¹¹⁰ and his scenes, with their relations running back to Greek tragedy and interwoven with modern classical tragedy, were almost stock material. Later critics, however, saw the play as an adaptation. Dibdin¹¹¹ remarked, without specific names, that *Alzuma* was "a mixture of three French tragedies," while the *Biographia Dra-*

¹⁰⁴ Pizarro, as husband, resembles Égisthe in *Oreste*; as king, resembles Alvarez in *Alzire*; as tyrant, resembles Polyphonte in *Merope*. *Alzuma* resembles Oreste in *Oreste*; resembles Zamore in *Alzire*; and resembles Égisthe in *Merope*. Orellana resembles Alzire, and resembles Électre in *Oreste*. Orazia resembles Clytemnestre, and at one moment, Merope.

¹⁰⁵ See p. 79.

¹⁰⁶ See p. 70.

¹⁰⁷ See p. 51.

¹⁰⁸ See p. 94.

¹⁰⁹ XXXV, 229.

¹¹⁰ His phrases were as apt to be reminiscent of other authors as of Voltaire. Cf. *Alzuma*, Act I:

"The Daemons and the human faculties,
Are then in dark conspiracy,"

with Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Act III:

"The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council."

¹¹¹ *History of the Stage*, v, 253.

*matica*¹¹² said that Murphy had "striven to unite the chief incidents of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Alzire*, and *Sémiramis*." The latter opinion may be contradicted, for the chief incidents of *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Sémiramis*, the recognition of brother and sister, and the accidental murder of mother by son, were united in *Oreste*, in a form closely imitated in *Alzuma*, while their form in *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Sémiramis* was only generally followed there.

Finally, it might be objected that Voltaire's *Oreste* was itself modeled on the *Electra* of Sophocles, and that it was possible, therefore, to accept Murphy's statement that he learned to construct his fable in the Greek school. But the character of Orazia in *Alzuma* has a much stronger resemblance to the Clytemnestra of Voltaire than to the Clytemnestra of Sophocles,¹¹³ and the fate which Voltaire gave her, a fate unlike that which she met in Sophocles, was assigned to her also by Murphy. In Sophocles—and in Euripides' *Electra*, too, by the way—Clytemnestra was deliberately murdered by her son; in Voltaire her death was accidental, and in Murphy too,

. . . Mischance, 'twas dire mischance
That wrought the deed.

Alzuma, then, the product of an imitative, rather than a creative pen, betrayed nearer originals than the remote ones Murphy named.

What he contributed was his diction and incidental philosophy; the "elevated" language, and the sentiments "that never failed producing a great clap." What he took over was a plot too complex to be compressed into a unified action. It was hard to postpone the catastrophe until so many scenes from so many sources, each perhaps credible in itself, could be worked in. "The five acts are spun out by most flinzy pretexts and most improbable interpositions," said one critic.¹¹⁴ "It is a mixture

¹¹² II, 22.

¹¹³ Genest (v, 365) pointed out this stronger resemblance.

¹¹⁴ *Westminster Magazine*, XXXVIII, 215.

of three French tragedies, the jarring interests of which the author endeavored to reconcile without success," said another.¹¹⁵

For his tragedy, of long delayed issue and tangled pattern, Murphy selected from Voltaire's three plays the episodes of tense situation, high emotion, or violent action, rather than of quiet preparation, calm reflection, or ordinary narration. In this choice he was true, first to his own habits, sacrificing "the regular course of nature to his passion for striking incidents and fine situations," and then to the English taste, relishing so keenly emotion and event.

So, with much irritation to himself on the road, and with constantly waning success, Murphy came to the end of his adaptations from Voltaire. It was a varied course that he had run, and various were the comments upon it. He had passed from vigorous melodramatic tragedy through thin and rather natural comedy, back to crowded and still more artificial tragedy. Garriek¹¹⁶ felt that "in all our dealings with the French theatre, Murphy has been the best adapter of their plays to the English stage"; but the *Dramatic Censor*¹¹⁷ denied him any credit: "let the dead call out for their own, and like the bird with borrowed feathers you would soon perceive him in a state of poetical nakedness"; and Joseph Knight,¹¹⁸ said that his "tragedies are among the worst that have obtained any reputation." Yet fate was not unduly unkind to him. He was fortunate in the mediocrity of his rivals; he was not so badly treated by the managers—in that direction he was "Nobody's enemy but his own"—and he had power that deserved Garriek's high estimate of his work. He shared with Hill and Miller the ability to adapt instead of translate Voltaire; and he went beyond them in knowledge of the theatre and strength of phrase.

¹¹⁵ Dibdin, *History of the Stage*, v, 253.

¹¹⁶ Garriek, I, 66, note.

¹¹⁷ II, 466.

¹¹⁸ *Dictionary of National Biography*.

CHAPTER VI

FRANCKLIN'S ADAPTATIONS FROM VOLTAIRE

Garrick's troubles with the adapters of Voltaire did not come singly. As he was heckled by Arthur Murphy, so he was solicited, now fawningly, now acridly, by the Reverend Thomas Francklin (1721-1784), that self-satisfied and shiftY academician. Francklin makes no attractive figure; he seems to have been unscrupulous, avaricious, vain. For a "valuable consideration,"¹ he lent his name to the booksellers as the author of translations from Voltaire actually by another hand; he had, by his own statement "but one view, in the exhibition" of his adaptations, "which is, money."² On the occasion of a performance for his benefit, his "poor family are all in tears," and he "in the greatest anxiety."³ Though he has "no vanity"² about him, he cannot endure the lightest criticism by Garrick. If Garrick says that there are "weak parts and languid scenes," in a tragedy of his, he cries: "And so there are in every tragedy extant."² If Garrick says that one of his tragedies is not so dramatic as an earlier one, he argues, in a long paragraph, that it is not inferior to that earlier one, and that the earlier one was better than Garrick thought it.² No wonder Garrick entitled the correspondence: "Letters from the righteous Dr. Francklin."⁴

The beginning of the Doctor's work on Voltaire was very inconspicuous. In April, 1760, the *Gentleman's Magazine*⁵ announced a new translation of the works of Voltaire, in monthly volumes,⁶ by "Dr. Smollet, and others." Francklin was one of the others; his name was printed with Smollett's on the title-

¹ Lounes, *Bibliographer's Manual*, iv, 2791; Dibdin, *History of the Stage*, v, 258.

² Garrick, I, 632.

³ Garrick, II, 43.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 44.

⁵ XXXI, 190.

⁶ This lengthy work was published, in one edition from 1761 to 1765, and in another from 1761 to 1770.

pages of the volumes after the first, and the seven volumes of the "Dramatic works of Mr. de Voltaire" were all inscribed, "translated by the Rev. Mr. Francklin." This was undoubtedly a bit of "literary swindling."⁷ There is no positive evidence that more than one of Voltaire's plays was actually translated by Francklin. Though the *Critical Review*⁸ at the time directly, and the *Cambridge History of English Literature*⁹ today, indirectly, accept him as the general translator of Voltaire's dramas, Lowndes¹⁰ and Dibdin⁷ condemn him for deceit; the British Museum catalogue says that he does not "appear to have taken any part in the translation," and W. P. Courtney, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, says that "the *Orestes* . . . and the *Electra* are believed to have been his sole share in the publication." There was no *Electra*¹¹ in the collection, nor did Voltaire ever write a play by that name, and *Orestes* remains probably the only contribution of Francklin to the translations.

There is no question that *Orestes* was his. The playbills on its first night announced it was "written by Voltaire and translated by the author of the *Earl of Warwick*"; and the magazines¹² named him as its author.

The stage presentation, which established the authorship of the play, came seven years¹³ after it was brought into England, tucked away so inconspicuously among the translations of twenty-five dramas of Voltaire. Francklin, in 1769, gave it to Mrs. Yates, for her benefit at Covent Garden; it was "got up in haste . . . for [this] favorite actress,"¹⁴ and produced on

⁷ Dibdin, *History of the Stage*, v, 258.

⁸ xi, 377.

⁹ x, 45. The article discusses Smollett and says: "The work of these strenuous years [1761-65] included . . . also . . . a translation, with Thomas Francklin, of the works of Voltaire."

¹⁰ *Bibliographer's Manual*, iv, 2791.

¹¹ Perhaps Mr. Courtney was misled by the fact that Francklin's *Orestes* was later performed under the name of *Electra*.

¹² *Court Magazine*, v, 155; *London Magazine*, xxxviii, 115; *Monthly Miscellany*, ii, 266.

¹³ After a comparative failure in 1750 it had been revived at Paris, and had won there a complete if belated success in 1762, the year of its publication in England, in volume 3 of "The Dramatic Works of Mr. de Voltaire."

¹⁴ *Court Magazine*, v, 155.

March 13. Five and a half years later, October 15, 1774, when Mrs. Yates went over to the rival theatre, and appeared at Drury Lane for the first time in eight years, she chose *Orestes*, which she now called *Electra*,¹⁵ for her opening performance.

On both occasions, the plaudits were for Mrs. Yates and not for Francklin. At the first, she was "inimitable,"¹⁶ and had "uncommon merit";¹⁷ on the second she was "as great as possible,"¹⁸ received by a "brilliant and crowded audience . . . with every mark of applause,"¹⁸ and shining "with unparalleled lustre."¹⁹ But for the play there was direct criticism of a "conduct" not "so accurate as might be wished"¹⁶ and of a "visible want of incident."¹⁶ "Most of Voltaire's pieces, when clothed in an English dress," said one magazine,¹⁸ "are heavy in the representation, and *Electra* is particularly so."²⁰ It was even suggested that "Sophocles' *Electra*, as translated by Mr. Francklin . . . would be a much more agreeable entertainment than the *Orestes* of Voltaire."²¹

There was at least this much balm for Francklin, that the play being a translation, its faults of action were Voltaire's and not his. A critic acknowledge this,²² but one "E. Maldon," to fame unknown, did not therefore relax his moral standard. He condemned a speech, and demanded that it should no longer be repeated, "however proper (it) may sound on the French stage."²³ This was Orestes':

If heaven expects obedience
It should give us laws we can obey.

¹⁵ This change in name was perhaps to emphasize the rôle of Mrs. Yates.

¹⁶ *London Magazine*, xxxviii, 115.

¹⁷ *Court Magazine*, v, 155.

¹⁸ *London Chronicle*, xxxvi, 375.

¹⁹ *Monthly Miscellany*, ii, 266.

²⁰ It is interesting to notice in connection with the criticism of the play for its lack of incident and heaviness that Voltaire had "shortened eloquent declamations in order to put more movement into the scenes" (*Oeuvres*, v, 77).

²¹ *London Magazine*, xxxviii, 115. Genest (v, 242 ff.) also preferred the work of Sophocles to that of Voltaire.

²² *London Magazine*, xxxviii, 115.

²³ Garrick, ii, 14.

There is no record that Garrick, on this account, "fitted up the Grecian fable, with true Protestant principles."

Voltaire's *Oreste*, which was presented in England more exactly as it had been written in France than was any other play of his, told the familiar story of filial revenge in its classical form, with such variations only as the death of the mother at the hands of the son by accident instead of design. Francklin's version disturbed none of the characters, incidents or motives of the play. The quality of his translation was neither very high nor very low. He had a hand practiced in putting foreign idiom into English speech by his translations from Sophocles and Lucian, and he was not hampered and cramped by his material, but quick to shift the order of phrases or whole lines, and to change the construction of sentences to suit his purpose. His meter was even and correct, running easily in its undistinguished course; his figures were tame and innocent of much imagination. The translation was so regular that it is difficult to find sections which are strongly contrasted in quality. These words of Clytemnaestra show the simpler aspect of Francklin's style:

Alas! my little race
Is almost run; the secret grief that long
Hath prey'd on my sad heart will finish soon
A life of woe; spite of Aegisthus, still
I love my children.—Act I, scene 3.

And these present its more formal side:

How dreadful 'tis to hate the blood that flow'd
Congenial with our own . . .
But injur'd nature, banish'd from my heart,
Indignant frowns, and to avenge herself
Now bids me tremble at the name of son.

—Act I, scene 4.

Without departing from his original, Francklin fell into that numerous English company of authors of invocations of revenge, in Electra's speech.

Arise ye furies, leave your dark abode
 For seats more guilty, and another hell,
 Open your dreary caverns, and receive
 Your victims; bring your flaming torches here,
 Daughters of vengeance, arm yourselves and me;
 Approach, with death and terror in your train;
 Orestes, Agamemnon, and Electra
 Invoke your aid, and lo! they come, I see
 Their glitt'ring swords, and unappall'd behold them:
 They are not half so dreadful as Aegisthus:
 The murth'rer comes; and see, they throng around him:
 Hell points him out, and yields him to my vengeance.²⁴

—Act IV, scene 4.

But the same faithfulness to Voltaire made him keep all the critical action of the last scenes off stage—the revolt of the people, the triumph of Orestes, the deaths of Aegisthus and Clytemnaestra, were hidden from the observers, forming a climax tame and lifeless from the romantic point of view.

On the whole, the *Oreste* of Voltaire,²⁵⁻²⁶ as translated by Francklin, had a fate different from that of most of his plays that reached the English stage. There were no concessions to

²⁴ This is the speech that Boaden mentions (*Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, II. 151) when he says: "In Act IV, scene 4, of *Oreste*, [Voltaire] has something of Shakespearean vigour. I see here, however different the subject, abundant proof to the critic of poetic feeling that Voltaire caught this from the dreadful invocation of Lady Macbeth:

"Come you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here. . . ."

²⁵ The dramatist, William Shirley, began an *Electra* in 1744, founded on the *Electra* of Sophocles, and thus coming from the same source as Voltaire's *Oreste*. Shirley finished his tragedy in the spring of 1745, but laid it aside on account of the breaking out of the rebellion. In 1762-63, a time between the publication of Francklin's translation of Voltaire's *Oreste* and its stage presentation, Shirley's play was accepted and put into rehearsal, but it was refused a license by two successive lord chamberlains. Shirley perforce yielded and was content with the publication of his work in 1765. A possible rival of Francklin's *Oreste* was thus banished from the stage.

²⁶ Francklin's version of Voltaire's *Oreste* does not represent the only trace of that play to appear in England. Fifty years after its last performance at Drury Lane there was given at Covent Garden, on April 20, 1825, a play called *Orestes in Argos*, by Peter Bayley. The author announced that in the first part of the tragedy he was much indebted to Sophocles, in the latter to Alfieri, and that one incident was suggested by the *Oreste* of Voltaire. Genest (IX, 305) remarked that "considerably more is borrowed from Voltaire, than is here acknowledged—but it may have been borrowed through the medium of Alfieri." The play's action follows that of Voltaire's *Oreste* only in general—it has borrowed little,

freer English taste. Voltaire himself, as far as that was possible, appeared in the work; his imaginings were not colored by the medium. For such a foreign growth no better fortune could have been predicted than it obtained. It was an academic exercise, and, once out of the translator's closet, with its "visible want of incident," and its particular "heaviness," could not expect to hold its own among more powerful and more native competitors.

MATILDA

The reception of *Orestes*, then, did not flatter the vanity of Francklin. The only praise was for the "favorite actress" who interpreted the leading rôle; the author and the translator fell among unfriendly reviewers. All this must be changed, if Francklin were to make any other borrowing from Voltaire. There should be no more Mrs. Yates; there should be no more acknowledgment of "a translation and not an original performance";²⁷ there should be no more mention of his own name. So, when Francklin came to prepare a version of another drama of

if anything, in actual phraseology. Otherwise, as is natural considering their common source, the two plots develop in a very similar way. Probably the "one incident" for which Bayley admits he is indebted to Voltaire, is the death of Clytemnaestra by accident in Act v, scene 4. Yet that whole scene is different from the final one in Voltaire, and furnishes another example of the English preference for action rather than narration, for vengeance and justice, even if violent, on the stage rather than behind the scenes. Aegisthus, bloody, rushes in terrified, a broken sword in his hand. Orestes pursues him, and though Aegisthus seizes the sword left by Orestes, and makes an irresolute show of resistance, his sword is struck down and he is killed. Pylades enters with the news that Clytemnaestra too is dead.

"Tws sad mischance, . . .

When on the miscreant that lies there thy sword
Was lifted, and thy blow shiver'd his blade,
Before thee Clytemnaestra rushed. Thine eye
Saw nothing but Aegisthus: no, not her,
Who clinging to thee, favour'd his escape,
Bought dearly with her life. For on thy sword
Whirl'd round at random in thy rage, she fell."

The incident was borrowed from Voltaire (as it was by Arthur Murphy in *Alzama*), but the details with which it was recounted rendered what was there tragic, here incredible. Orestes' emotions in the last moment of the play were also appropriated from Voltaire, but these few traces of the French author are too slight to throw any doubt on Bayley's sincerity in naming Sophocles and Alfieri as his direct sources.

²⁷ *London Magazine*, XXXVIII, 115.

Voltaire, he rejected Garrick's advice to make use of Mrs. Yates for his principal character: "she could be of no service to me in the piece I am now writing; nor had I ever the least view towards her."²⁸ He made no avowal, (aside from the private correspondence with Garrick) of the source of his play: nowhere, in dedication, or occasional pieces, was Voltaire mentioned. Moreover, he wrote Garrick: "Whenever I appear on the stage, I propose for many reasons to be *incog*."²⁹

The new play, about which an atmosphere of concealment was thus thrown, was a version of Voltaire's *Amélie*, or *Le Duc de Foix*, renamed *Matilda* by Francklin. It was the subject of a long and irritated correspondence between Garrick and "the reverend translator of Sophocles," a correspondence that suggests, by its alternate wrath and humility, that of Murphy and Garrick over *Alzuma*. There was a translation of *Amélie*³⁰ in the English edition of Voltaire published under the names of Smollett and Francklin, but this was probably not Francklin's work. This translation appeared in 1761: in 1765 the play was revived with great success in Paris; by 1768 Francklin had his adaptation well under way. On September 27³¹ of that year he began to write to Garrick about it, with its scenes, some still "imperfect," but others "highly finished," and with its part of the Duke "amazingly improved." Garrick might use it by Christmas or "defer it to the next season." In fact, he deferred it many seasons, until January 21, 1775. The long interval was punctuated by letters of complaint and ironic humility from Francklin, and of irritation and explanation from Garrick.³²

Mrs. Yates was kept out of the cast, but the "incognito" went to pieces as soon as *Matilda* appeared at Drury Lane. Francklin published his play under the old circumlocution "The

²⁸ Garrick, I, 336.

²⁹ Garrick, I, 335.

³⁰ This tragedy, played with some success at Paris in 1752, was a later version of Voltaire's *Adélaïde du Guesclin*, which had appeared under unfavorable conditions at Paris in 1734.

³¹ Garrick, I, 335.

³² Garrick, I, 336, 463, 614, 616, 630, 632.

Author of *The Earl of Warwick*," and the magazines took care of the source. "The idea . . . is visibly borrowed from Voltaire's *Duke of Foix*" said two of them;³³ "there remain very visible marks of the original" said a third;³⁴ "*Matilda* . . . plainly betrays her origin" said another,³⁵ and Francklin "might have fairly and publicly acknowledged his obligations to Voltaire," said a fifth.³⁶

At least Francklin dodged the chorus of praise for actress and of silence for author. Miss Younge, who took the rôle of Matilda, "deservedly obtained an uncommon share of applause"³⁷ but did not monopolize it. The play was called: "one of the best which has appeared for some years past,"³⁸ and, by three magazines, "one of the best tragedies which the modern theatre has furnished."³⁹ It had "real merit,"⁴⁰ it was an "excellent picture," and a great improvement over its model.⁴¹ Even a less favorable critic,⁴² who found it "sometimes languid and uninteresting" admitted that it "met with uncommon applause." Only one less kindly writer found "the piece . . . equal, cool, and regular, like the most part of the tragedies of

³³ *Oxford Magazine*, XII, 5ff; *Monthly Miscellany*, III, 62ff.

³⁴ *Town and Country Magazine*, VII, 43.

³⁵ *Monthly Review*, LII, 173.

³⁶ *Critical Review*, XXXIX, 138: Since Francklin's day the source of *Matilda* has sometimes been pointed out and sometimes disregarded. The *Biographia Dramatica* noted it twice (I, 255; III, 30); Dibdin remarked it (*History of the Stage*, v, 258), but Genest did not mention Voltaire in his account (v, 446) of what he called "a moderate tragedy." Since Genest *Matilda* has not usually been dealt with as an adaptation from Voltaire. The editor of Garrick's Correspondence (I, 632, note) naturally noted the fact; the British Museum Catalogue attributes the play to Voltaire, but W. P. Courtney in the article on Francklin in the *Dictionary of National Biography* speaks of it as of an original play; and neither Professor Lounsbury (in *Shakespeare and Voltaire*) nor Professor Nettleton (in *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century* or *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. 10) mentions it among the English versions of Voltaire.

³⁷ *Oxford Magazine*, XII, 5ff.

³⁸ *Critical Review*, XXXIX, 138.

³⁹ *Oxford Magazine*, XII, 5; *Universal Magazine*, LVI, 35; *Monthly Miscellany*, III, 62.

⁴⁰ *London Review*, I, 147.

⁴¹ *Critical Review*, XXXIX, 138; *Oxford Magazine*, XII, 5; *Monthly Miscellany*, III, 62.

⁴² *Town and Country Magazine*, VII, 43.

our neighbors," and concluded "If the author means to challenge any large domain in Parnassus by so slight a tenure as this tragedy, his claim may be compared to the custom . . . of holding a great estate by a pepper-corn."⁴³

Matilda's stage history was as much more prosperous than *Orestes'* as the criticisms were more favorable. Instead of being performed three or four times, it was played eleven times⁴⁴ in its opening season, and twice the following year at Drury Lane. It was given at Covent Garden on March 7, 1785, for the benefit of Miss Younge, still in her original rôle. Meanwhile it had been played at York and Liverpool in 1777, and at Dublin in the seasons of 1781-1782, and 1782-1783, with casts that included Mrs. Siddons and Kemble.

It is not surprising that *Matilda* should have had a better fate on the stage than *Orestes*, for instead of being a translation, it was a "well-naturalized version"⁴⁵ of its original. Though the motives and characters underwent no great change; though the old *Knight's Tale* triangle of *Le Duc de Foix* was undisturbed; though Morcar was still the fiery Duke, *Matilda* the loyal maid, and Siward the bluff friend, the setting and action were thoroughly domesticated. France became England; the period of Pepin, the period of the Norman Conquest; the Duke of Foix, the Earl of Mercia; the costumes "good old English dresses, as worn in the time of William the Conqueror."⁴⁶ The exposition was shortened; the active and eventful scenes were expanded. Voltaire's first two acts were telescoped into one, and the ground cleared for Francklin's second act to open with the critical events that were held until the third act in Voltaire. The theatrical effect of the action was heightened, and the suspense at its climax protracted.

Swooning, cries for revenge, and a tolling bell were some of

⁴³ *Monthly Review*, LII, 173.

⁴⁴ Garrick's Correspondence (II, 44) preserves a balance sheet for the first nine nights of *Matilda's* run, showing receipts of £1700, and an author's balance of £336.

⁴⁵ Garrick, I, 632, note.

⁴⁶ Garrick, II, 43.

Francelin's accessories. When, in the third act, Edwin approached Matilda, she with a greater sensibility, familiar to English audiences, fainted at the sight of him. When Morear, in Act iv, was stirred to action; he cried:

Vengeance! I am thine,
And thine alone: Thou daughter of despair!
Destructive Goddess! come, possess my soul
With all thy terrors—

When, at the end of the fourth act, Siward left, presumably to murder Edwin, he said:

When thou hear'st
The solemn curfew sound, conclude
The business done.

And when, in the last act, the bell tolled, Morear was tortured by a vision of the bleeding victim.

Le Duc de Foix, instead of coming to a foreseen and bloody end, came to an unforeseen and happy one. In the scenes preceding the dénouement, scenes which in classical tragedy usually delay the outcome rather than raise question about it, there was genuine suspense. This interest in an imminent but undecided event, Francelin successfully took over and elaborated. The scene at the end of Act iv, was "masterly," with "strokes of pathos which we do not remember to have met with in any modern writer"⁴⁷ . . . from the middle of the fourth to the end of the fifth act "few performances are more interesting . . . a downright turbulence of applause . . . attended the whole of the last act."⁴⁸

Francelin's style throughout *Matilda*, while it would not bear comparison with Voltaire's, was above the average of that of the later English adapters of Voltaire. His vocabulary was copious; his taste usually restrained; his verse reasonably forceful. But he had the English fondness for generalized sentiments and figures of speech. A strain of moralization ran through his play, from Matilda's reflection in her first scene:

⁴⁷ *Critical Review*, xxxix, 138.

⁴⁸ *Oxford Magazine*, xii, 5ff.

Oft times
The flow'ry path that tempts our wand'ring steps
But leads to misery.

to Morecar's lines which close the play:

By *my* example teach a future age,
The dire effects of loose, unbridled rage.
Teach thoughtless men their passions to control,
And curb the follies of th' impetuous soul, . . .
Lest they experience worse than Morecar's woe,
Nor find a Siward—to prevent the blow.

Woven with this strain of sentiment was the other of figurative language, very frequently if not very effectively called upon to heighten the poetic tone of the scenes, as in Matilda's early speech:

Edwin's tender passion
Is soft and gentle as the balmy breath
Of vernal zephyrs; whilst the savage north,
That curls the angry ocean into storms,
Is a faint image of Earl Morecar's love.

and in her fancy in the fourth act:

We are embark'd on a tumultuous sea,
And must abide the fury of the storm.
The waves of angry fortune may o'erwhelm
But *shall not* part us: We will stem the torrent,
Brave the proud ocean's rage, and gain the harbour
Of peace and happiness—or *sink* together.

Francklin in *Matilda*, then, reversing the plan he had followed in *Orcstes*, naturalizing instead of translating his original, fell into the formula of English adaptation from Voltaire. He abbreviated scenes of preparation; he expanded scenes of event and suspense; he introduced the devices of melodrama; he revelled in moralized sentiment and figurative diction. With these changes, coupled with some vigor in versification and breadth in vocabulary, he won at least this small measure of success—that he wrote the last version of any of Voltaire's tragedies to

run for more than one season in England. Yet, though he worked in the established direction, though he gained a modicum of success, he could not escape the cloud that covered Voltaire's work for English critics: there was "little business,"⁴⁹ the play was "equal, cool, and regular,"⁵⁰ its scenes were "less busy than declamatory."⁵¹ It needed a revolutionary adapter to make a tragedy of Voltaire's active enough to satisfy English taste, and Francklin, "the reverend translator of Sophocles," had not the fire in his veins to burn away the crust of classic convention.

⁴⁹ *Town and Country Magazine*, VII, 43.

⁵⁰ *Monthly Review*, LII, 173.

⁵¹ *Oxford Magazine*, XII, 5ff; *Universal Magazine*, LVI, 35ff.

CHAPTER VII

COLMAN'S *ENGLISH MERCHANT* AND MACKLIN'S
MAN OF THE WORLD

Voltaire's full fifty years of Europe were beginning to spend themselves by the end of the 1760-1770 decade. It was some forty years since the picturesque figure of the antiroyalist exile had last been seen in England: it was thirty-five years since his *Brutus* had begun the line of his plays on the English stage. Since the early thirties much water had flowed under the bridges: much ink had been spilt to blacken the generous fame the English first accorded him. The winter of his reputation was soon to set in. Another ten years would mark the end of the transfer of his plays to England. Yet there was a richness in the autumn days. The earlier adaptations—*Zara*, *Merope*, *Mahomet*, *The Orphan of China*—still kept the stage. A new comedy, *The English Merchant*, proved his best in England, and four other new productions, a comedy and three tragedies, broadened, if they did not lengthen, his appeal.

But the interest of English dramatists in him now became more casual. There was no more "holding of a niche" in eighteenth century English drama by virtue of him alone, as there had been with Hill. Writers like Colman the elder and Charles Macklin borrowed from him only a single play or a fragment of a play—their reputation had other sources. The other borrowers, Madame Celestia, Joseph Cradock and George Ayseough, had no reputation.

By chance it was in comedy that the better known men of this period drew from Voltaire. Colman the elder developed his *English Merchant*, played in 1767, from Voltaire's *L'Écossaise*, and Charles Macklin used in his *Man of the World*, played in Ireland in 1766, in England not until 1781, a portion of Voltaire's *Nanine*. Both of these comedies were literary *revuants*.

The *English Merchant* was the ghost of a ghost. Its French original was disguised by Voltaire in a burst of fiction as a translation of an English comedy, the *Scotchwoman*, said to have been written by "M. Hume." The *Man of the World*, also a ghost, brought back to England figures actually born there, but its ancestor, far more substantial than the imagined progenitor of *L'Écossaise*, was Richardson's *Pamela*.

The story about "M. Hume" and the *Scotchwoman* was a part of Voltaire's elaborate introduction of a satire aimed at his enemy Fréron. In the play a "Fréron," a "Hornet" was ridiculed and exposed; but this ridicule and exposure, it was part of Voltaire's scheme to show, had nothing to do with Fréron. The resemblance to him was accidental, as one must realize, knowing that the play was the translation by "Jérôme Carré, natif de Montauban" of the *Scotchwoman* by "M. Hume," of Edinburgh. That there was no Jérôme Carré made no difference, and that there was no mention of the *Scotchwoman* in any of the articles about "Hume" was "a bagatelle."¹ Voltaire had letters from the Scotch author to his French translator, one of which reproached him because he had "quite impoverish'd the character of Wasp . . . and blotted his chastisement at the end of the drama."

Voltaire's subterfuge was soon abandoned, and his controversy with Fréron did not disturb the English. But *L'Écossaise*, which was very successful at Paris on July 26, 1760, was reviewed in London in August of that year,² and in a translation, called *The Coffee-House or Fair Fugitive*, was published there by Wilkie within a month.³ This translation coming so immediately after the presentation of the play⁴ was praised by one magazine as happily preserving the ease and freedom of the

¹ *L'Écossaise*, Foreword, *À Messieurs Les Parisiens*.

² *Critical Review*, x, 153.

³ *Monthly Review*, xxiii, 237; *Critical Review*, x, 241; *London Magazine*, xxix, 560.

⁴ The early review and translation of *L'Écossaise* are explained by the fact that it was printed in French almost two months before it was presented in Paris. The printed play arrived at Paris about the end of May, 1760, with London on the title page, but it was actually printed at Geneva. (*Oeuvres*, v, 402-403.)

original,⁵ and condemned by another as "too literal to bear either acting or reading."⁶ It soon passed out of notice, and did not deter Colman from an adaptation of its original.

It was six and a half years later that he produced his version, under the title of *The English Merchant*.⁷ Caught between the law, the church, and letters for a profession, he had, through his intimacy with Garrick, turned to letters; and by chance had seen his first dramatic attempt, *Polly Honeycombe*, produced as an afterpiece of Hill's version of Voltaire's *Mérope*, in the year in which *L'Écossaise* first appeared, 1760. This attempt had been followed by such successes as *The Jealous Wife* and *The Clandestine Marriage*, written in collaboration with Garrick, so that his position was well established when he brought out *The English Merchant* at Drury Lane on February 21, 1767. Yet there was some misgiving before the curtain went up. Garrick thought the play would be acceptable to the pit and boxes, but would fail in the other parts of the house.⁸ Two of the actors expected to be hissed.⁹ Yet the play had a first run of fourteen nights. The next fall it appeared both at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and there are records of its production in London in 1769 and 1771, at Bath in 1775, at Liverpool in 1776, and at York in 1777. In 1776, after a stormy experience as manager of Covent Garden, Colman gained control of the Haymarket Theatre. He "got together a good company," and opened his theatre with the *English Merchant* on May 15, 1777. For some seasons thereafter the play was put on at that theatre, in the years 1779, 1781, 1782, 1784, 1786, 1788, and 1789. In the last year it was also given at Bath. In America, too, it had some success, being given at Charleston in 1774, in Jamaica in

⁵ *Critical Review*, x, 241.

⁶ *Monthly Review*, xxiii, 237.

⁷ Professor Nettleton, in his bibliography to chapter 4 of volume 10 of the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, gives 1760 as the date of the printed English version of *The English Merchant*. *The English Merchant* did not appear on the stage nor in print until 1767 and the version of *L'Écossaise* printed in 1760 was the translation called *The Coffee-House or Fair Fugitive*.

⁸ Davies, *Life of Garrick*, II, 45.

⁹ *Life of Mrs. Abington*, pp. 42ff., quoted Genest, v, 122.

1780, in New York in 1786 under the title of *The Benevolent Merchant*, in New York and Philadelphia in 1789, in Philadelphia in 1790 and 1791, in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1795, and finally in Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1796. In the many groups that interpreted the play were Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Bellamy, Mrs. Siddons, Lee Lewes, Powell, Kemble, Holland, Shuter, Reddish, and Woodward.

A sheaf of pleasant comments indicated that the *Merchant* had a prosperous start on its "trading-voyage." The actors, with the exception of Yates,¹⁰ were liberally praised; all of them did "strictest justice to the author,"¹¹ and two "displayed a wonderful variety of talent."¹² The play was "so very tender, sentimental, and affecting, that night after night the audience [was] melted and dissolved away."¹³ Its "sentimental speeches" were touching¹⁴ and gave the play "a warmth and sensibility that lays hold of the hearer, and takes possession of his innermost soul."¹⁵ Though a large amount of space was given to extracts, synopses, prologue and epilogue,¹⁵ it was Colman's engaging of the "softer feelings"¹³ that won the day with the critics and apparently with the whole house.

What unkindness has been shown towards the work has been in Voltaire's direction. Colman was held to have improved his model,¹⁶ which was "cold and inanimate,"¹⁷ and to have altered many oversights of Voltaire's with great judgment.¹⁸ Dibdin¹⁹ said the play was "too French, and too cold for any great admiration on the English stage," and Victor,²⁰ though he reported

¹⁰ *Biographia Dramatica*, II, 197.

¹¹ *London Magazine*, XXXVI, 141.

¹² Davies, *Life of Garrick*, II, 46.

¹³ *Court Miscellany*, III, 97ff.

¹⁴ *London Magazine*, XXXVI, 141; *Critical Review*, XXIII, 214.

¹⁵ *Court Miscellany*, III, 103-104; *London Magazine*, XXXVI, 89, 141ff.; *Monthly Review*, XXXVI, 224ff.; *Critical Review*, XXIII, 214ff.; *Universal Magazine*, XL, 131ff.; *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXVII, 136; *Theatrical Bouquet*, pp. 59, 88.

¹⁶ Genest, v, 122ff.

¹⁷ *Court Miscellany*, III, 97.

¹⁸ *Monthly Review*, XXXVI, 224ff.

¹⁹ *History of the Stage*, v, 273.

²⁰ *History of the Theatres of London*, III, 100ff.

that it was "performed with great applause," was sorry that Colman "adhered so closely to Voltaire," and "wished he had done more for himself."

Voltaire himself wrote to Colman concerning *The English Merchant*, but the letter was largely filled with débris of the old conflict with Fréron. He said that Colman had "tremendously embellished"²¹ *L'Écossaise*, and that he was "a better policeman," because he had punished Spatter,²² something which Voltaire, feeling a repugnance to letting the rascal appear any longer on the stage, had not dared to do. Colman the younger²³ thought Voltaire's letter was "equivocal"; and the phrase "tremendously embellished" a sneer, and Joseph Knight²⁴ thought that the letter had "more than a suspicion of satire." But, though Voltaire perhaps meant to damn with loud praise, he was not thinking of Colman's adaptation at all, but of making a point in his controversy with Fréron. He wrote with the public, not Colman, in his mind's eye.

L'Écossaise, being "what the French call a *wceping*, or *whining* Comedy,"²⁵ gave Colman every opportunity to fall into the lachrymose school of sentimentalists that, in 1767, ruled the London stage, still unchallenged by the healthy ridicule of Goldsmith and Sheridan. There was no far-away setting; no exalted station to keep Voltaire from "stealing on the hearts" of his auditors. The scene was homely and native—a London coffee-house; the characters were familiar and lifelike—an exiled Scotchman and his daughter. The distresses of Amelia, the woes of her father, the villainy of Lady Alton and Spatter, the lovable benevolence of Freeport,²⁶ all were to carry an elemental appeal.

²¹ "furieusement embelli." The letter is on p. 167 of vol. 46 of *Oeuvres*.

²² Yet the *Critical Review* (XXIII, 214) said that Colman was "a little too niggardly of poetical justice" with regard to Spatter.

²³ *Posthumous Letters to Francis Colman, and George Colman, the Elder*.

²⁴ Article on Colman the elder. *Dictionary of National Biography*.

²⁵ Article on *The Coffee House*, *Monthly Review*, XXIII, 237, September, 1760.

²⁶ The English names of the characters are used.

Their appeal was not weakened by Colman. For once the critics had some right to compare the English play favorably with its original. This was not a case of a mediocre Englishman supported by the work of Voltaire, but of a mediocre work by Voltaire in the hands of an able Englishman, an "English Terence"²⁷ of his time. The prose of *L'Écossaise* was much easier to translate than the Alexandrines of the tragedies; the comedy style of Colman was nearly equal to Voltaire's; the adaptation was not a piece of hack work unworthy of the original, but a comedy of real spirit and effectiveness.

But the critic who condemned Colman for adhering too closely to Voltaire²⁸ was astray from the facts. The farther Colman went in his adaptation, the less he adhered to the language and events of his model. The acts of his play formed an ascending series in originality.²⁹ Just as Murphy in *No One's Enemy but His Own* had been able to insert and rearrange material without breaking down the plot, so Colman was able to shuffle the scenes and incidents of *L'Écossaise* into a new, more serious and straightforward pattern. Voltaire's comedy, bustling with misunderstanding and intrigue, carrying a bit of true love through trials and griefs to a happy issue, was strengthened by a more sustained struggle, with greater coherence of plot, moving away from the type of light comedy to that of light.

²⁷ *Monthly Review*, XXXVI, 224.

²⁸ See p. 171.

²⁹ Outline of acts III, IV, and V of *The English Merchant* compared with acts III, IV, and V of *L'Écossaise*.

Act III of *The English Merchant* derives its material: (a) from Act III, scenes 6 and 7, of *L'Écossaise*; (b) from Act III, scene 1, of *L'Écossaise*; (c) from Act IV, scene 6, of *L'Écossaise*; (d) from Act III, scene 4, of *L'Écossaise*; (e) from Colman's invention (scene between Sir William and Freeport).

Act IV of *The English Merchant* derives its material: (a) from Colman's invention (scene between Lady Alton and Spatter); (b) from Colman's invention (scene between Freeport and Owen); (c) from Act IV, scene 1, of *L'Écossaise*; (d) from Act IV, scene 2, of *L'Écossaise*; (e) from Act IV, scene 5, of *L'Écossaise*; (f) from Act IV, scene 3, of *L'Écossaise*; (g) from Act IV, scene 4, of *L'Écossaise*.

Act V of *The English Merchant* derives its material: (a) from Colman's invention (scene with Falbridge, La France, Spatter); (b) from Colman's invention (scene between Falbridge and Lady Alton); (c) from Colman's invention (scene with Falbridge, Lady Alton, Amelia, Sir William, Freeport).

mediated tragedy. It was in keeping with this greater seriousness that Colman was "a better policeman" at the end, meting out sharper punishment to his Spatter³⁰ than Voltaire had given his *Frélon*.

Like the better policeman that he was, he knew and respected Mrs. Grundy. His villainess patronized the distressed heroine. "How much it is beneath a person of my rank to parley with one of your condition." His hero made the "*amende honorable*" of the marriage offer with the argument: "Your justice must acquit me of the intention of the offence, since at that time I was ignorant of your illustrious extraction." His benevolent merchant lost the simplicity which made him order his chocolate and newspaper brought to Amelia's room, and then push open the door and stalk into the presence of the astounded heroine. Now the landlady must vouch for him: "Here is a gentleman of my acquaintance begs leave to speak with you"; she must give his name; she must describe him; her fears that his entrance will be "indelicate, sir," must be stilled, and Amelia must consent to the interview only when she is convinced that he is "a particular acquaintance" of her friend.

Of course this merchant, this "original," this "crude respectable fellow who knew how to be benevolent but not how to live," was a humour character ready to Colman's hand, as Careless had been ready to Murphy's in *No One's Enemy but His Own*. Moreover, as Murphy in that play made Sir Philip Figuerin dance through his plot, so Colman here gave his villainess, Lady Alton, a "literary conceit," which, thought one critic, "raised her character to a pitch of ridicule,"³¹ which it lacked in the French. In one short dialogue³² she talked of "the Apollo of the Age," "Mrs. Melpomene," Phaon, Sappho, Jason, Medea, Calypso, Ulysses, a Siren, "the heart of Zoilus, the pen of Mevius, and the tongue of Thersites." Add to her affectation the new rôle of the faithful Owen, Mrs. Goodman for a landlady; the

³⁰ Yet Spatter was allowed to sneak off, unmolested by the hero, who had "no leisure" to punish him.

³¹ *Monthly Review*, xxxvi, 224.

³² Act II, opening scene.

toadyism of La France and the pious excellence³³ of the hero, and it is clear that Colman, like Murphy, painted the characters of Voltaire with new ruling passions of conceit; that he, too, wrote in the school of humour comedy.

Of sentimental comedy he was also a devoted pupil. At the fall of the curtain sentiment instead of humour usually holds the stage, and in *The English Merchant* it held it long. The pardon for the exiles, which cut the knot of their difficulties, in Voltaire came twelve lines before the final curtain. Here it came five pages before it. Voltaire's close was brief and decisive; Colman's lingering and benedictional. The merchant retraced the past in a prosy speech of twenty-five lines, the longest in the play at the worst possible place for it. Then confessing his liking for Amelia, he relinquished her to the hero, and she, hitherto cold towards her lover, relented, saying:

Your actions this day, and your solicitude for my father, have re-deemed you in my good opinion; and the consent of Sir William, seconded by so powerful an advocate as Mr. Freeport, cannot be contended with. Take my hand, my Lord! a virtuous passion may inhabit the purest breast; and I am not ashamed to confess, that I had conceived a partiality for you, till your own conduct turned my heart against you.

THE MAN OF THE WORLD

This pious figure, this Amelia of the reasoning heart, was a natural forerunner of the other struggling heroine of Voltaire's, who, by indirection, returned to England.

This other heroine came from that *Pamela* which had given so great an impetus to the lachrymose wave that engulfed the literature of the mid-eighteenth century. On the Parisian stage Boissy's *Paméla, ou la Vertu mieux éprouvée* (1743), and Nivelle de Lachaussee's *Paméla* (1743) had been born of that impulse. But they were such weak offspring that when Voltaire, six years later, adopted Pamela, he decided to "unbaptise" her, and re-

³³ "And now, good heaven! that art the protection of innocence, second my endeavors! enable me to repair the affront I have offered to injured virtue, and let me relieve the unhappy from their distresses!" (Act IV, end.)

name her Nanine. As Nanine she had more life,³⁴ and as Nanine she returned, in vastly altered form, to England, in Charles Macklin's *True-born Scotchman*, a play complete by February 21, 1764,³⁵ but not appearing in England until 1781. Although by that time the French play had been published in London as *Nanine, or The Man Without Prejudice*,³⁶ Macklin's indebtedness to Voltaire's *Nanine* for a part of his action was not noticed, and has not been, except by Genest.³⁷ The rôles from *Nanine* were so overshadowed by the parts of Macklin's own invention, and the play had been so long in English when it came to London, that it is not surprising that it passed muster as an original work. It had appeared in Dublin in 1766;³⁸ had been "frequently repeated with applause"³⁹ there, and rejected at London at first "through Scottish influence."⁴⁰ Revised by its author by a painstaking "polishing process,"⁴¹ it had long rested in the lord chamberlain's office,⁴¹ and had finally come to the London stage at Covent Garden, May 10, 1781, as *The Man of the World*. Macklin, over eighty years old, played the Scotchman, Sir Pertinax, exhibiting "uncommon strength,"⁴² "a specimen of human power unequalled in the annals of the theatre,"⁴¹ "a wonderful instance of strength and longevity."⁴³ He was followed in the part by Cooke in 1802, by Kean in 1882, by Young in 1823, and by Phelps in 1851. Phelps "nearly rivalled the author in his impersonation."⁴¹

After its early seasons in Dublin, in 1766 and 1770, and its first year at Covent Garden, in 1781, *The Man of the World* appeared at that theatre in 1784, 1786, 1788, 1790, 1797, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1811, 1816, 1823, 1824, and

³⁴ Yet Piron answered Voltaire's question why he did not hiss the production of *Nanine*: "'Twas impossible, a man cannot hiss and yawn at the same time.'" Dibdin, *History of the Stage*, II, 190.

³⁵ Kirkman, *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin*, I, 457.

³⁶ Translated by Rev. David Williams and published by Fielding and Walker, 1780.

³⁷ VI, 172, 197.

³⁸ Crow Street Theatre, February 7.

³⁹ *Universal Magazine*, LXVIII, 251, May, 1781.

⁴⁰ *Lady's Magazine*, XII, 259, May, 1781.

⁴¹ Parry, *Charles Macklin*, pp. 145ff.

⁴² Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, I, 236 ff.

⁴³ *Memoirs of Cooke*, I, 207ff.

1828. Meanwhile it had been produced at Bath in 1808, 1824, and 1826, at the Haymarket in 1815 and 1816, at Drury Lane in 1822, 1824, and 1828; and lastly it was revived at Sadler's Wells in 1851. Its greatest success was at Covent Garden between 1802 and 1809, when Cooke was giving his much praised interpretation of Sir Pertinax.

It seems that despite Macklin's careful revision before 1781 there was still an "offended Scotch clique,"⁴⁴ and a chorus of harsh criticism for *The Man of the World's* first night at Covent Garden. One writer suggested, though, that if retouched and considerably compressed "it would be by much the best play that has been produced on the English Theatres the last twenty years."⁴⁵ "Strictures in print and hints from friends made Macklin use the pruning-knife with such dexterity that on its second representation it met with universal applause."⁴⁶ It now gave "universal satisfaction," and by the strength of its leading rôle, a rôle "so masterly that there is no more chance of its ever being lost to the stage, than there is for the dismissal of Sir Giles Overreach himself,"⁴⁷ it came to be called "a comedy that shines as one of the few jewels of the modern English stage."⁴⁸ Macklin's "masterpiece . . . one of the best comedies of the century."⁴⁹

Macklin hitched a bit of Voltaire to the star of Sir Pertinax, and the work of the Frenchman remained so long on the English stage only by virtue of that conjunction. Here was a humour character indeed, and one in a constellation of his kind. Sir Pertinax Maesycophant, unscrupulous, material, quick to anger, eanny to the last degree, was the Scotchman, the man of this world, not the next, satisfied to lay up for himself treasures on earth. He was set off by Lady Maesycophant, long subdued under the lash of his tongue, and by Rodolpha, with her strong Scotch honesty and accent. Then there were Lord Lumbereourt,

⁴⁴ Parry, *Charles Macklin*, pp. 145ff.

⁴⁵ *Westminster Magazine*, XLIV, 230.

⁴⁶ *Town and Country Magazine*, XIII, 237.

⁴⁷ Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, I, 236ff.

⁴⁸ Dunlap, *Memoirs of the Life of G. F. Cooke*, I, 207ff.

⁴⁹ Joseph Knight, article on Macklin, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Colonel Toper, Captain Hardbottle, Counsellor Plausible, Sergeant Eitherside, and Betty Hint, a whole group of Jonsonian creations to put beside Sir Philip in *No One's Enemy but His Own* and Lady Alton in *The English Merchant* in the list of "humours" that enriched Voltaire's comedies in England.

The bit of Voltaire that lived in conjunction with Sir Pertinax was all sentiment. "That part . . . which concerns Constantia and Melville,"⁵⁰ in Genest's words, made up the borrowing. It was a thin shadow of the bulk of *Pamela*, but the voice was the voice of Richardson:

I am a poor, forsaken, helpless orphan. Your benevolent mother found me, took me to her bosom, and there supplied my parental loss with every tender care, indulgent dalliance, and with all the sweet persuasion that maternal fondness, religious precept, polished manners, and hourly example, could administer. She fostered me; (*Weeps*;) and shall I now turn viper, and with black ingratitude sting the tender heart that thus has cherished me? Shall I seduce her house's heir, and kill her peace? No—though I loved to the mad extreme of female fondness; though every worldly bliss that woman's vanity or man's ambition could desire, followed the indulgence of my love, and all the contempt and misery of this life the denial of that indulgence, I would discharge my duty to my benefactress, my earthly guardian, my more than parent!

And this "cruel virtue of her self-denial" was no more on the sentimental key than was the return of her father,⁵¹ his fears for her chastity, and his joy when he learned that it had been preserved.

Constantia, then, though outshone by Sir Pertinax, remained pivotal in the plot. Like Nanine in the French play, she was more talked about than talking; like Nanine she was the center about which swung the hearts of the others. Through her, virtue won the day; through her, Sir Pertinax learned the fallibility of the best laid schemes; through her Voltaire contributed sure form to Macklin's play. Reduce *The Man of the World* to its essential forwarding incidents, and there is little that was not borrowed. When Macklin is praised for firm construction and strict observance of the unities;⁵² when his play is held up as

⁵⁰ Genest, VI, 197.

⁵¹ The scenes in Act V follow *Nanine* in word and motive more closely than any others in the play.

⁵² Parry, *Charles Macklin*, pp. 145 ff.

a model for "modern dramatic writers" because of these qualities: he is being given credit for what Voltaire furnished him—a swift-moving, simple, unified plot.

But it must be understood that Voltaire's contribution to *The Man of the World* was in a form that hid its source. There were more differences between *The Man of the World* and *Nanine* than there were likenesses. Not only was the whole central portion of the English play untouched and uncolored by French material, but parts of the French play went entirely by the board in its transition to England. To appropriate a situation from one play and make it the foundation of another was a very different matter from taking a play written in one language and adapting it, speech by speech, to another. There was no problem of varying the conventions of the stage, the length of the speeches, the amount of narrative, or the pitch of the emotion: there was simply the use of the general course of action of the French play as the foundation of the English. Stripped of its author's language, bare of his thought and spirit, submerged under fresh material, the last of Voltaire's comedies to find any place on the English stage had but a shadowy existence there.

It shared with *No One's Enemy but His Own* and *The English Merchant* a thoroughly native setting, with Sir Pertinax's house "ten miles from London," with "the cook . . . galloping over the common, . . . only three-quarters of an hour, coming from Hyde-park Corner"; with talk of Gaffer Hodge's at Hadley, of London and ministerial receptions. It shared with them very definitely that addition of humour characters and of sentimental episodes which put them in the stream of the English comedy of the time. Sir Philip Figuerin with his thirty couple, Lady Alton with her Mrs. Melpomene, Sir Pertinax with his sycophancy, Amelia with the "virtuous passion in her purest heart," and Constantia with the "cruel virtue of her self-denial" were no exotic figures on the London stage, but the visible witness that these comedies of Voltaire were thoroughly naturalized to England.

CHAPTER VIII
THE LAST ADAPTATIONS

ALMIDA

"... to-night a lady sues
From soft Italia's shores, an English muse;

* * * * *

True to her birth she pants for British bays,
And to her country trusts for genuine praise.
From infancy well read in tragic lore,
She treads the path her father trod before."

So ran the poet laureate Whitehead's prologue for *Almida*. "Before the representation of the piece Billy Whitehead, (who seems to have been a kind of dry nurse to it) sent . . . to the audience—a mess of watergruel, which out of compliment to the bearer, and the innocence of the ingredients, they consented to swallow."¹ The lady of the "watergruel" was Madame Dorothea Mallet Celesia, her father was David Mallet; on "soft Italia's shores," at the villa of her husband in Genoa, she had entertained Garrick on his tour in 1764 and 1765, with "the politest reception," an introduction to the *dilettanti* and all the fashionable circles.² Through him she sued "an English muse" with her translation of Voltaire's *Tancrède*, made in the summer of 1768 "to pass less heavily"³ her leisure hours.

Here was a correspondence with no rift in the lute. When she offered *Almida* to Garrick, on June 4, 1769,⁴ it was in most "obedient, humble terms"; when she received his acceptance, in January, 1770,⁵ it was to be overcome by his "indulgence," and to be most amiable in submitting to his opinions. He, on his side, secured the "mess of watergruel" from the poet laureate.

¹ *Critical Review*, xxxi, 71.

² Murphy, *Life of Garrick*, II, 85-86.

³ Garrick, I, 354.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 379.

and wrote himself⁶ an epilogue, "a salver of . . . champagne."⁷ Then he arranged for the tragedy, at Drury Lane, January 12, 1771, a cast which he felt gave it every advantage his theatre could afford.⁸ Madame Celesia returned "utmost satisfaction" and closed the correspondence with a shower of thanks to the laureate, the leading actress, and the manager.⁹

She owed, without doubt, these thanks. Garrick had spared no expense in giving a splendid stage setting,¹⁰ and had assigned the rôle of Almida to Mrs. Barry, "the Muse's true representative,"¹¹ requesting her to "call forth all her powers."¹² She had responded: she was "uncommonly happy" in the most critical situations;¹³ her "admirable performance . . . surpassed all description."¹⁴ Her "very great theatrical abilities,"¹⁵ and her "enchantments,"¹⁴ made her rise "like perfection out of Chaos."¹⁵

Chaos, apparently, was Madame Celesia's work; at least, chaotic was its effect upon her critics. To many of them Mrs. Barry's acting was the one redeeming feature of the performance.¹⁶ "Nothing, except . . . [her] power, could have supported this piece upon the stage," said one,¹⁷ who condemned it for its "stage-tricks" and "complicated absurdity." Another,¹⁸ who argued under seven formal heads the illegality of a portion of the action, decided that it was "inconsistent," and at times "more absurd than a burlesque." Yet there was bright-

⁶ Whitehead's prologue and Garrick's epilogue were printed in the *London Magazine*, XL, 49; the *Universal Magazine*, XLVIII, 42; the *Lady's Magazine*, II, 279; the *Town and Country Magazine*, III, 48.

⁷ *Critical Review*, XXXI, 71.

⁸ Murphy, *Life of Garrick*, II, 85.

⁹ Garrick, I, 415.

¹⁰ Gordon Goodwin, article on Madame Celesia, *Dictionary of National Biography*; Advertisement, *Almida*; edition 1771.

¹¹ *Town and Country Magazine*, III, 38.

¹² *Lady's Magazine*, II, 263.

¹³ *Monthly Review*, XLIV, 145.

¹⁴ *London Magazine*, XL, 7.

¹⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine*, XLI, 128.

¹⁶ *London Magazine*, XL, 7; Murphy, *Life of Garrick*, II, 85-86; *Biographia Dramatica*, II, 30.

¹⁷ *Monthly Review*, XLIV, 145ff.

¹⁸ *Gentleman's Magazine*, XLI, 127.

ness as well as darkness: there was praise for "the power of the poet":¹⁹ "the little blemishes" were said to be concealed by the "splendor of sentiment and animated pathos,"²⁰ and the play was reported to have met "with great applause,"²⁰ with "uncommon encouragement,"²¹ and with "success beyond the career of modern tragedy."²²

Probably that "politest reception" of Garrick at Genoa had much to do with the play's seeing the light at Drury Lane, for its own worth could never have commended it highly to Garrick. *Tancrède*, the original, had been "severely handled by the critics,"²³ and, though *Almida* was "no unanimated translation,"²⁴ it remained "still too much a French play to please an English audience."²⁵ Narrative prevailed over action;²⁶ the play was "very middling,"²⁷ The *Biographia Dramatica* called it "very poor";²⁸ Genest said it had "little to recommend it"; Dibdin said it was "without success";²⁹ and Gordon Goodwin, in his article on Madame Celesia in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, said that its success was "far beyond its merits." So it seems plain that the favor and prestige of Garrick, the enthusiasm for Mrs. Barry, and the patronage of "Mr. Mallet's surviving friends"³⁰ were to be thanked for *Almida's* run of ten or twelve nights. In any case, one Drury Lane production paid for one reception at Genoa, for Madame Celesia's scheme for another translation³¹ met no encouragement from Garrick.

After all, this absentee authorship had little chance of success. Madame Celesia was a citizen of the world; and, as she wrote more than once in her letters, her ten years' absence from Eng-

¹⁹ *London Magazine*, XL, 7.

²⁰ *Town and Country Magazine*, III, 38.

²¹ *Lady's Magazine*, II, 263.

²² Garrick, I, 354, note.

²³ *Town and Country Magazine*, III, 38.

²⁴ *Critical Review*, XXXI, 71.

²⁵ *Monthly Review*, XLIV, 150.

²⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine*, XLI, 127.

²⁷ *Letters of Horace Walpole*, VIII, 8.

²⁸ II, 20.

²⁹ *History of the Stage*, v, 315.

³⁰ Murphy, *Life of Garrick*, II, 85-86.

³¹ Garrick, I, 416.

land had worn down her clearer memories of her birthplace. Living in Italy, in a home the resort of foreigners of many nations, she had become cosmopolitan in her tastes; she "translated her original like a poet, not like an interpreter." Her friends flattered themselves "that the spirit of Voltaire [had] been preserved,"³² but the spirit of Voltaire was not the spirit to breathe life into a play on the English stage. Though it was in this case the spirit of the heroic play; though it sang of "love and arms . . . the mighty two";³³ by 1771 these banners of an emptier day on the English stage were frayed and tattered.

Yet, though she was honest in her endeavor to be a poet instead of an interpreter, though she did not change the device on Tancréd's banner, Madame Celestia was more than a literal translator. She turned the "*rimcs croisés*" of Voltaire into an involved blank verse, which made her language seem "rather that of the epic than of the drama."³⁴ She made passages beautiful for their form alone; without sense of reality and dramatic fitness; and she clouded the action with new morals; from the praise of:

The love that springs from harmony of souls,
And mutual choice, above the stupid forms
Of vanity and pride; joy far beyond
The gross desire; the paradise of minds!
Unfelt, and unconceiv'd by vulgar breasts,

to the epitaph:

See, mortals see, what ruin is brought on
By our too violent tho' virtuous passions!

Reaching the pathos and catastrophe of the last acts, she grew more intense in her style. These were the scenes that had won tears in Paris;³⁵ and at Genoa, where Madame Celestia chose

³² Advertisement, *Almida*; edition 1771.

³³ Prologue, *Almida*.

³⁴ *Monthly Review*, XLIV, 150.

³⁵ Voltaire turned one of these tears against Fréron—the "Spatter" of *The English Merchant*: "'Tis said that Satan was in the theatre in the guise of Fréron, and that, a lady's tear having fallen on his nose, he said 'psh, psh,' as if it had been holy water" (*Oeuvres*, v, 490).

the play because "there was not a dry eye in the house during the last act."³⁶ These were the only scenes that spurred her to any real revision. It seems as though the French treatment of critical events could never quite satisfy the English. No polished finish, no careful psychology, no poetic taste and restraint compensated for a lack of the stuff of serious romantic drama, the vivid language of character under stress of tragic circumstance. So even Madame Celestia, with her English memories a bit dull, adds, perhaps unconsciously, exclamation, rhetorical question, and pathetic appeal to her original, bringing it nearer the English manner of impassioned diction, raising its feelings to such a pitch that there were "tears in every eye of every audience," if the advertisement of the play may be credited. Though she began quietly, she went beyond her goal, and, facing the repression of Voltaire's classicism, surrendered, like many others, to the impulse for fuller expression of emotion. But her surrender came too late; it was nullified by the languor and wearisomeness³⁷ of the early acts, by all the coldness of the French play, and by the mediocrity of her own style.

ZOBEIDE

Before the end of 1771 another adaptation from Voltaire followed *Almida* on the London stage, a version of *Les Scythes* called *Zobeide*. Its author, Joseph Cradock, while just as obscure a dramatist as Madame Celestia, was not so remote from England and English theatres. A man of letters, "a sort of twin brother"³⁸ of Garrick in mind and body, he indulged a fondness for the stage, gave private theatricals in his mansion at Gunley, was a prominent figure at the Stratford Jubilee, and brought to his adaptation of Voltaire the advantage of familiarity with the theatres of London. Yet, in *Zobeide*, he did not make a wise choice either of material or theatre. *Les Scythes*, his source, withdrawn after four performances at Paris in 1767,

³⁶ Garrick, I, 354.

³⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine*, xli, 127.

³⁸ Leslie Stephen, article on Cradock, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

and published by Voltaire as a "very feeble—unfinished sketch,"³⁹ had none of the prestige of Parisian success behind it. Covent Garden, the theatre which brought out his play December 11, instead of supporting it with a splendid production as Drury Lane under Garrick had supported *Almida*, seems to have given it commonplace scenery and an inferior and indisposed cast.⁴⁰

"The scenes gave no opportunity for the painter to merit great applause," and the dresses were "adequate to propriety, but reached not elegance."⁴¹ The play was "coldly acted,"⁴². One actress was "poor,"⁴³ one actor's figure and voice were very ill-suited to his character,⁴⁴ another was "turgid in his delivery,"⁴⁴ and another made "awkward gestures and raven-like croaking."⁴³ Mrs. Yates, as Zobeide, though "happily suited,"⁴⁴ by a part which seemed "purposely written"⁴³ for her, was "beloved by none of her associates,"⁴² and, though the "principal support"⁴⁵ of the play, "fell into a political indisposition."⁴⁵ This seemed an unkind cut from one who was of the family, so to speak, for Cradock gave the profits from the performance to her, and her husband introduced him to Oliver Goldsmith,⁴⁶ who wrote a prologue for *Zobeide*. Goldsmith's prologue and Arthur Murphy's epilogue gave the occasional pieces some distinction, winning praise,⁴⁷ and many reprintings,⁴⁸ but the play disappeared from the stage after eleven performances.

³⁹ Preface, *Les Scythes*, Paris, 1767. The publication was noticed at London by the *Monthly Review* (xxxvii, 519ff.) in 1767.

⁴⁰ The experience of *Almida* at Drury Lane and of *Zobeide* at Covent Garden was parallel to that of Murphy's *Orphan of China* and his *Alzuma* at those theatres. See pp. 87-88.

⁴¹ *Town and Country Magazine*, xliii, 635ff.

⁴² Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, viii, 579.

⁴³ *Oxford Magazine*, vii, 231ff.

⁴⁴ *Town and Country Magazine*, lxiii, 635.

⁴⁵ *London Magazine*, xl, 611.

⁴⁶ Austin Dobson, *Life of Oliver Goldsmith*, p. 167.

⁴⁷ *Oxford Magazine*, vii, 231; *Monthly Review*, xliii, 635; *Critical Review*, xxxii, 459ff.

⁴⁸ *Lady's Magazine*, ii, 280; *London Magazine*, xl, 614; *Universal Magazine*, xlix, 320; *Court Magazine*, vii, 568; *Scot's Magazine*, xxxiii, 655; *Theatrical Bouquet*, pp. 107, 260.

This was about as long a run as it merited, judging from the critics, who, while they rose to conventional praise, descended also to terse obituaries. To call the play "one of the most pleasing dramas hitherto imported from France,"⁴⁹ "a more interesting tragedy than we have seen for some years,"⁵⁰ "greatly superior to many of our tragedies,"⁵¹ was their highest tribute: to call it "a meagre . . . outline or sketch," rather than a "finished production,"⁵¹ "not a first-rate Performance,"⁴³ a play that "languished and died away in the representation . . . *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*,"⁴⁵ was their sharpest condemnation.

There was discussion enough of the source, language, plot, and pathos of *Zobeide*, but the criticisms cancelled each other. One magazine condemned Cradock for being "totally silent with regard to the capital circumstance" of its derivation from *Les Scythes*,⁵² but others⁵³ spoke of its relation to Voltaire without any hint that Cradock had tried to conceal his original. The style was called, on the one hand, "poetical"⁵⁴ and "elegant and nervous,"⁵⁵ on the other, "[passing] the bonds of common sense in the ardor of pursuit after bold metaphors and sublime expression."⁵² The incidents, according to some critics, were "interesting and important,"⁵⁴ and "the plot full of events, every one of which was calculated to become important, striking the hearer with pleasure, terror, or surprise";⁵⁶ yet according to another, these incidents were "too few to keep the attention awake, or leave room for . . . the *jeu de théâtre*,"⁵⁷ The situation, to one hearer, was "remarkably pathetic and affecting,"⁵⁶ to another "truly pathetic,"⁵⁴ but to a third it was "senti-

⁴⁹ *Critical Review*, XXXII, 459ff.

⁵⁰ *Lady's Magazine*, II, 266ff.

⁵¹ *Monthly Review*, XLIII, 635.

⁵² *Monthly Review*, XLV, 44.

⁵³ *Critical Review*, XXXII, 459ff.; *Lady's Magazine*, II, 266; *Oxford Magazine*, VII, 231. Genest (v, 330ff.) and the *Biographia Dramatica* (III, 432) also treated *Zobeide* as an adaptation without any hint of concealment by Cradock.

⁵⁴ *Oxford Magazine*, VII, 257ff.

⁵⁵ *Critical Review*, XXXII, 459ff.

⁵⁶ *Lady's Magazine*, II, 266ff.

mental,—not pathetic."⁵⁷ It was a case of a house divided, and a rising vote would hardly have decided the issues. Perhaps the writer⁵⁴ who said that he did not criticise the play harshly because it was Cradock's first work and because the author was so generous to Mrs. Yates, and who concluded that it had "some defects," but that its merits predominated, came the nearest to showing the wisdom of Solomon.

It took no Solomon to notice how radically Cradock had re-written the last two acts of *Lcs Scythcs*, and that portion of his play was most favorably reviewed.⁵⁸ Indeed it was not until those scenes that *Zobcide* became in any sense the expansion of Voltaire's "sketch." In the early acts it was just the opposite. There Cradock used the shears unsparingly, stripping the exposition of its lengthy speeches, its description, apposition and classical wordiness, following Voltaire's lead in word, phrase and action: translating closely, often literally; making the few additions in a scanty and conventional diction; and far overbalancing them by omissions.

As he passed from these early scenes to more active ones, his own imagination began to stir a bit: he threw off his timidity and began to expand, as well as translate. A tableau, where "Indater and Zobeide lay their hands upon the altar," gave him his first impulse. He added an epithalamium, with special music, and thus prolonged the picture. Then through Athamand, the hero, he sought especially to increase the warmth and excitement of the action, making him cry:

But now I rave—O pity my distractions!
The fire-ey'd transports of tyrannic love!
Hell is in ev'ry thought.

She weds a Scythian.
I see him in her arms—O hold my brain!
She twines him now with unrepining rapture.
Seize him this instant.

My life, my love! . . . my better angel!

⁵⁷ *London Magazine*, XL, 611.

⁵⁸ *Monthly Review*, XLV, 411; *Critical Review*, XXXII, 459ff.; *Oxford Magazine*, VII, 231.

To answer his transports, Zobeide's "*c'est pour mon malheur*," is expanded into:

Think on the ills your faithless love has caus'd;
 Think I was driven from a parent soil,
 Where ev'ry joy press'd onward to my wishes;
 Think what I suffer'd, when o'er trackless wastes
 I wander'd all expos'd—When north-winds rag'd,
 And hideous monsters howl'd their fell complainings:
 Where can the wretched find a peaceful shelter?
 Ah! where indeed? When he, her only hope,
 Forsook, despis'd, abandon'd, and betray'd her.

Athamand's new response to these arrows of pathos might be echoed:

No more, my love.

Zobeide gave Mrs. Yates, it was said, "an opportunity of displaying all her theatrical powers to the utmost extent in the different Passions of Grief, Rage and Despair," and those passions were chiefly raised by Cradock's additions in the last two acts. Here the fitness of the new title appeared, for Voltaire's long reflections on the Scythians and their customs were suppressed in favor of Zobeide and her woes. Cradock added new scenes, and stretched the final catastrophe to thrice its original length. There, especially, he sought spectacle, solemnity, and suspense, adding slow music at a distance, a dead march, and an abundance of "Grief, Rage and Despair" for Zobeide. Unfortunately he mistook rant for eloquence, generalization for elevation, and fustian griefs for pathos; unfortunately he could paint these only in the tawdry colors of an impoverished vocabulary: so that, however sound his purpose and the tendency of his changes, there was no real force in his production. *Zobeide* was his only play, and its early and permanent withdrawal from the stage was not surprising.

SEMIRAMIS

The story of Semiramis was anyone's property. It had been told twice in seventeenth century France and twice in eighteenth century France⁵⁹ before Voltaire approached it, and his version had been twice translated in England and twice considered for an adaptation there, before George Ayseough brought it on the stage. It might have been expected that Voltaire's *Sémiramis* would be at once adapted in London, considering the crowd in the theatre and in the streets, the critical excitement of Voltaire's challenge of Crébillon, the brilliant decorations of the stage, the controversy over a ghost in the play, and its long run at Paris in 1748. But only a ripple of interest and criticism in a magazine⁶⁰ appeared, and not until 1760, was there even so substantial a response as an anonymous translation.⁶¹ This was at once condemned as "very bad,"⁶² "faulty,"⁶³ "mean" and "every way unworthy of the original";⁶⁴ and was succeeded in 1761, by a translation in Smollett and Francklin's edition, bearing Francklin's name on the title page, but probably not by him.⁶⁵ Following this, Madame Celestia, in 1771, fresh from having a play accepted by Garrick, approached him about a version of *Sémiramis*,⁶⁶ but

⁵⁹ By Gilbert, Desfontaines, Mme. de Gomez, and Crébillon.

⁶⁰ *Gentleman's Magazine*, xviii, 435ff., October 1748; xviii, 483ff., November, 1748.

⁶¹ Published by Kearsly.

⁶² *Monthly Review*, xxiii, 224.

⁶³ *Critical Review*, x, 154.

⁶⁴ *Monthly Review*, xxiii, 247.

⁶⁵ There is no evidence that Francklin was the actual translator of *Sémiramis* (see p. 94). But "K," writing in the *London Review* for December, 1776 (iv, 463ff.), thought there was too little variation between the 1761 version and Ayseough's to warrant the difference in profits between benefit-nights and bookseller's pay. The *Town and Country Magazine*, too (viii, 475) said that Ayseough's work was "little more than a version of Voltaire's piece, as rendered by Dr. Francklin," and the *Biographia Dramatica* (iii, 255) called Ayseough's work a wretched "translation of a translation." But these comments may be discounted, for the other magazines accepted Ayseough's work as coming directly from Voltaire; after all some similarity between two translations of the same original was inevitable, and Dr. Francklin preserved a silence about a share in the receipts which, if he had had any chance to press such a claim, would not have been in keeping with his avowed mercenary purposes (see p. 93).

without securing a response, and slightly later George Keate (1730-1781), who "had adapted *Scéramis* to the English stage,"⁶⁷ did so only to have his version "superseded,"⁶⁸ by Captain Ayscough's.

This George Ayscough, who had a commission in the Guards, "was a feeble writer, a man of fashion, who hankered after literary fame."⁶⁹ He knew the ropes in London, and most obsequiously offered his play to Garrick, because he was "well convinced that every piece comes out with so much greater *clat*, and so much better chance of success at Drury-lane, than it must be *rejected* and *refused* by you, before I should think of offering it to Covent Garden."⁷⁰ Ayscough had "greater influence"⁷¹ than Keate, and Garrick accepted his *Scéramis*. On its first night, December 13, 1776, his brother officers attended in full force, and "secured the play's success."⁷² He "appeared in various parts of the house, thrusting out his head to engage the attention and receive the homage of the spectators."⁷³ The night was not all undiluted pleasure for him; the brother officers "were all so sick of their duty under him, that they never returned to it a second time,"⁷⁴ and one of the actresses was "violently hissed" in a concerted and prearranged attack from the galleries.⁷⁵

But certainly Ayscough's trust in the *clat* of a Garrick production was justified. There was an epilogue by R. B. Sheridan,⁷⁴ which was "very good"⁷⁵ and "most exquisitely writ-

⁶⁶ Garrick, I, 416.

⁶⁷ *Biographia Dramatica*, III, 257.

⁶⁸ Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, II, 332.

⁶⁹ Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, I, 80ff.

⁷⁰ Garrick, II, 82.

⁷¹ *Biographia Dramatica*, III, 257.

⁷² Article on Ayscough, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁷³ Oulton, *History of the London Theatre*, I, 50ff.

⁷⁴ The prologue (by Ayscough) and the epilogue were criticized or reprinted in the following: *Scot's Magazine*, XXXVIII, 661, 664; *Critical Review*, XLII, 476; *Lady's Magazine*, VII, 619, 663; *London Review*, IV, 463; *Town and Country Magazine*, VIII, 475, 480; *London Magazine*, XLV, 703; *Universal Magazine*, LIX, 321; *Oxford Magazine*, XIII, 725; *Gentleman's Magazine*, XLVII, 39; *Theatrical Bouquet*, pp. 51, 53.

⁷⁵ Genest, v, 549.

ten."⁷⁶ The scenery and decorations were "very good"⁷⁷ and "did honor to the artist who regulates them at Drury Lane";⁷⁸ the dresses were "characteristic and superb,"⁷⁷ Mrs. Yates' robes being "magnificently royal—her head-dress, by an elegant disposition of a black feather at the ground of some white ones . . . [being] the most superb and striking we ever beheld."⁷⁷ Mrs. Yates' acting was "singularly great and powerful,"⁷⁷ and "the performers did all justice to their parts."⁷⁹ With all the aid of epilogue and paint and millinery and acting, however, *Scmiramis* ran for only eleven nights of not very brilliant financial and artistic returns, and then disappeared, except for performances at Bath and York in 1777.

The returns in criticism were no more generous. Ayseough's original was "the weakest of all possible supports, the sandy foundation of a French fable," chilled "with some of those certain situations so characteristic of French frigidity," and would have made a British audience yawn "over its ill-ranged garb of French frippery."⁷⁶ Even though he had improved it,⁸⁰ there was little peculiar to his version "except a number of very unpoetical lines, puerile expressions, pedantic terms, and bold phrases, for which at Westminster School he would have been well-whipped."⁸¹ It was a "medioere production";⁷⁸ "it had little claim to applause with its improbable story and deficient versification."⁸² "Voltaire had the confidence to shoot in the same bow with Shakespeare, and failed; Captain Ayseough has given Voltaire his revenge."⁸³

Indeed, compared with earlier English versions of Voltaire's tragedies, Ayseough's was thin and pale. His diction was poor and colorless; Voltaire, who held the adjective the enemy of the noun, would have groaned at his epithets, which made his

⁷⁶ Dibdin, *History of the Stage*, v, 317.

⁷⁷ *Oxford Magazine*, xiii, 720ff.

⁷⁸ *Town and Country Magazine*, viii, 475ff.

⁷⁹ *Lady's Magazine*, vii, 619ff.

⁸⁰ *Critical Review*, xlii, 476.

⁸¹ *London Review*, iv, 463ff.

⁸² *Scot's Magazine*, xxxviii, 664.

⁸³ *Monthly Review*, lvi, 66.

princesses "sage," his soldiers "rough," his maids "bright," his youths "bold," and his ruffians "daring." Ayseough had no consistent plan except to shorten the reflective portions of the French, and to reduce the long speeches, and surely those changes were by 1776 the established routine of adaptation. To call him "a feeble writer," was to do him no wrong.

That feebleness thwarted his attempts to make more harrowing the ghost that Voltaire had borrowed from *Hamlet*.⁸⁴ By various misfortunes this apparition, in the French, had lost all power, as it unfolded its tale, to make "each particular hair to stand an end." At the Paris first night the stage was so crowded with friends of Voltaire and Crébillon that the watchman, not seeing passage way even for a phantom, shouted "Make room for the ghost." The spirit tripped on the feet of the young lords, and almost fell.⁸⁵ In the action it appeared "in the broad glare of the sun, and once more annoyed the drawing-room of Semiramis,"⁸⁶ merely moaning and chattering. Though it was only "ashes," Semiramis clasped its knees. Ayseough, knowing the scorn that had been lavished on this incredible creature, sought to make it less ridiculous. He removed the offending line about the embrace of its knees, and, instead of letting it bolt "out at noon-day . . . in the midst of all the assembled satraps of the realm,"⁸⁷ he let it appear only to Semiramis and two others. But in England it was still a cursed spirit: "We were highly disgusted with the appearance of this same ghost: the property-man, to mend the matter, having dressed him up in a blue surtout: so that he looked like an old Chelsea pensioner, posted there to prevent the surgeons from robbing the cemetery."⁸⁸ Indeed, neither Ayseough nor the stage manager had the imagination to render the scene more naturally supernatural, and the spirit sprung from Shakespeare, won no welcome in its

⁸⁴ The relation of the ghost in *Sémiramis* to the one in *Hamlet* is discussed by Genest (v. 347) and by Professor Lounsbury (*Shakespeare and Voltaire*, pp. 125-131).

⁸⁵ Voltaire, *Oeuvres*, iv, 481ff.

⁸⁶ Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, i, 80ff.

⁸⁷ *Biographia Dramatica*, iii, 257.

native land, where "the unsightly gentry of ghosts had been for some time banished the stage with good success."⁸⁸

An effort by Ayscough to dodge the "frigidity" of the last act was more successful than this hopeless revamping of an impossible ghost. There he added thunder, and thunder and lightning, to mark the catastrophe, and made the villain fall by the hand of the avenging son before the father's shrine on the stage "instead of being tamely sent off . . . as in Voltaire . . . to be executed by guards out of the sight of the incensed and interested audience."⁸⁹ But now Ayscough must expand Voltaire's moral,

Plus le coupable est grand, plus grand est le supplice.

into:

Such sad examples should instruct mankind,
The higher they are plac'd in this bad world
The stricter they are call'd to their account,
The more severely punish'd. . . O that all, then
Wou'd set due bonds to fierce o'er-bearing passion,
And seek the paths of never-erring virtue!
Then should they meet a bright reward on earth,
With peace, and joys ineffable hereafter.

This was a "prosiac passage," in which, "had it come from a non-con country parson, the language might pass."⁹⁰

Times and tastes had changed; Voltaire's star in France was drawing to its exigent; the day was not distant when an ovation for him at the Théâtre Français would make his old heart beat too fast for life. *Almida* and *Zobeide* and *Scmiramis* in England lent no light to his last years. They were relies of first nights of long ago across the Channel: they spoke in no forth-right native voice to English audiences; theirs were foreign, mediocere, feeble, tones. It was but natural that the words of adaptations written long before them, written with more force and imagination and insight, should have been heard on the English stage after their weaker phrases were banished from it.

⁸⁸ *London Review*, IV, 463ff.

⁸⁹ *Oxford Magazine*, XIII, 720ff.

⁹⁰ *London Review*, IV, 463ff.

CHAPTER IX

THE AUTHOR'S FATE AT THE HANDS OF THE
ADAPTERS

It is no wonder, considering the eighteenth century, that Voltaire was not interested in the English drama of his time. There was no life in it. Nothing was growing. Bourgeois tragedy, fleeting satire, rigid classicism, parasitic sentimentality, flourished in their little day and passed. Only the actor-manager Garrick, and the store of stock pieces bequeathed by more robust generations, kept any blood in the flabby and exhausted present. In the years between the first and last production of an adaptation from Voltaire, between the *Brutus* of 1734 and the *Sémiramis* of 1776—and these years spanned Garrick's career—no vital change came in the English dramatic world. Voltaire's plays never crossed or hastened any strong current of progress, nor hindered or aided any reaction. There simply was no strong current of progress and no reaction. It was not that nothing happened, but that nothing important happened. *Brutus* and *Sémiramis* themselves showed how static was the situation. Duncombe's Roman consul and Ayscough's Assyrian queen belonged to the same house—house royal but inbred. Dwelling in the same world of lofty passions, they thrilled to the same dignities; they spoke the same tongue. The forty years between them had given to the English playwright no sharper realism, no new daring.

But Voltaire, if all the accounts of these forty years were cast up, had not progressed any more surely than his English contemporaries. He also had not advanced to sharper realism or new daring. Let critics of his own race speak. "He was," says H. Legrand,¹ "too timid in his boldness . . . contented to patch up classical tragedy without changing it in its essence—

¹ *Voltaire, Théâtre Choisi*, p. 7.

not understanding that it was necessary to turn . . . conventional constraints upside down and give liberty to art." "He held," says Lanson,² "to external inventions which did not change the traditional basis and the worn-out custom of tragedy. He thought he had performed a miracle if he carried the action . . . into Asia, Africa, or America. In *Brutus*, the red robes of the senators; in *Adélaïde* the firing of a cannon; in *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, the costuming of Lekain as a Tartar, with a great bow in his hand and hideous feathers waving on an impossible helmet . . . such were the inventions by which Voltaire remedied the coldness of tragedy." And such inventions he never went beyond. *Zaïre*, *Alzire*, and *Mérope*, coming in 1732, 1736, and 1743, he did not surpass in the thirty-five years of dramatic writing that followed, and indeed did not approach after *L'Orphelin de la Chine* in 1755. The ridiculous specter in *Sémiramis* (1748), the *rimcs croisés* of *Tancrède* (1760), the "hyperborean" Persians in *Les Scythes* (1767), were not the issue of a creative mind. The English, who had a chance to see all his major tragedies, paid their only solid tribute to *Zara*, *Mahomet*, *Mérope*, and *The Orphan of China*, neglecting whatever came in later years. It was as true of Voltaire's work as of the English drama of his time, that there was no life in it; nothing was growing.

But London was growing. There were new and better theatres; more productions, more actors, more critics; larger audiences. On this growing stage Voltaire's plays had a place. Here at last life entered. There was clash and problem and friction: the French manner had to be adapted to the English mood; the voices of the plays had to be changed to a tone that would not drop unfamiliarly and discordantly on London ears. Material born of a French mind, molded on French models, had to pass through the medium of English minds, be remolded to English models, reappear in new and hybrid form. There was a reaction of race on race. What went in was the work of the foremost Frenchman of his day; what it passed through was a motley

² *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 643.

group of English adapters of many vocations: what came out bore the marks both of the maker and remakers, both of the Gaul and the Anglo-Saxon. The transfer of these plays from a stage that flew the flag of classicism to one that had been ruled by the romanticists was bound to carry revolutions in its wake. It was not merely a surface matter to shift allegiance from the colors of the theatre of which Corneille and Racine were the great names, to those of the theatre that did homage to Shakespeare.

So the record of these adaptations has been a record of naturalization. The tradition of the romantic Elizabethan drama, the shadowy figure of Shakespeare, guided the adapters, and made them shun the declamation and narration of the French, and substitute emotion, violent action, deaths on the stage—the business and panoply of melodrama. It made them soften the austerity of elevated unhuman characters, and dwell on justice and revenge. The tradition of the immediate past made them seek effect in strained, unnatural language, superhuman powers and endurances and scenes of high-strung heroics. The growing habit of the present made them moralizing sentimentalists, clouding all goodly deeds with oratorical, vain, and pious comment. In comedy they tried to add to Voltaire's thin and nervous plots the humours and the dialogue that has enriched lighter English drama. The ideals of acting—ideals that drove the actor to tear a passion to tatters and o'erstep the modesty of nature—drove the adapters to rant and poses that might "never fail producing a great clap." They were journeymen playwrights, most of these adapters, and they worked in the shop where they had been apprenticed.

Their product, it has been seen, was considerable. The catalogue of it holds sixteen names:³

³ Of these sixteen plays twelve (*Brutus*, *Zara*, *Alzira*, *Merope*, *Mahomet*, *The Orphan of China*, *No one's Enemy but His Own*, *The English Merchant*, *Almida*, *Zobeide*, *Orestes*, *Semiramis*) are named by Professor Lounsbury (*Shakespeare and Voltaire*, pp. 304-306) and by Professor Nettleton (*The Cambridge History of English Literature*, x, 439; *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, pp. 198ff., 235ff.) in their accounts of Voltaire and the English theatre. *Roman Revenge* is also mentioned by Professor Lounsbury, and *Alzuma* and *Cyrus* (Hoole) by Professor Nettleton, as drawing from Voltaire. Thus the list furnished by these accounts

Name	Played	Adapted by	From	First presented in France
<i>Junius Brutus</i>	Nov. 25, 1734, at Drury Lane	William Duncombe	<i>Brutus</i>	Dec. 11, 1730
<i>Zara</i>	Jan. 12, 1736, at Drury Lane	Aaron Hill	<i>Zaïre</i>	Aug. 13, 1732
<i>Alzira</i>	June 18, 1736, at Lincoln's Inn Fields	Aaron Hill	<i>Alzire</i>	Jan. 27, 1736
<i>Mahomet the Impostor</i>	April 25, 1744, at Drury Lane	James Miller and John Hoadley and (later) David Garrick	<i>Le Fanatisme</i>	April, 1741
<i>Merope</i>	April 15, 1749, at Drury Lane	Aaron Hill	<i>Méropé</i>	Feb. 20, 1743
* <i>The Roman Revenge</i>	Summer, 1753, at Bath	Aaron Hill	<i>La Mort de César</i>	Aug. 29, 1743
<i>The Orphan of China</i>	April 21, 1759, at Drury Lane	Arthur Murphy	<i>L'Orphelin de la Chine</i>	Aug. 20, 1755
* <i>No One's Enemy but His Own</i>	Jan. 9, 1764, at Covent Garden	Arthur Murphy	<i>L'Indiscret</i>	Aug. 1, 1725
* <i>The Man of the World</i>	Feb. 7, 1766, at Dublin May 10, 1781, at Covent Garden	Charles Macklin	<i>Nanine</i>	June 16, 1749
* <i>The English Merchant</i>	Feb. 21, 1767, at Drury Lane	George Colman, the elder	<i>L'Écossaise</i>	July 26, 1760
<i>Orestes</i>	Mar. 13, 1769, at Covent Garden	Thomas Francklin	<i>Oreste</i>	Jan. 12, 1750
<i>Almida</i>	Jan. 12, 1771, at Drury Lane	Dorothea Ceesia	<i>Tancrède</i>	Sept. 3, 1760
<i>Zobobie</i>	Dec. 11, 1771, at Covent Garden	Joseph Cradock	<i>Les Scythes</i>	Mar. 26, 1767
* <i>Alzuma</i>	Feb. 23, 1772, at Covent Garden	Arthur Murphy	<i>Orest</i> (and <i>Alzire</i>)	Jan. 12, 1750 Jan. 27, 1736
<i>Matilda</i>	Jan. 21, 1775, at Drury Lane	Thomas Francklin	<i>Le Duc de Foix</i>	Aug. 17, 1752
<i>Semiramis</i>	Dec. 13, 1776, at Drury Lane	George Ayseough	<i>Sémiramis</i>	Aug. 29, 1748

* Partial adaptations.

While these sixteen plays were finding a place on the English stage, the following thirteen tragedies and nine comedies of Voltaire, acted in France, went without any production in England:

<i>Oedipe</i> (1718)	<i>Les Originaux</i> (1732)
<i>Artémire</i> (1720)	<i>L'Échange</i> (1734)
<i>Mariamne</i> (1724)	<i>L'Enfant prodigue</i> (1736)
<i>Eriphyle</i> (1732)	<i>Thérèse</i> (1743)
<i>Zulime</i> (1740)	<i>La Prude</i> (1747)
<i>Rome Sauvée</i> (1752)	<i>La Femme qui a Raison</i> (1749)
<i>Socrate</i> (1759)	<i>Le Droit du Seigneur</i> (1762)
<i>Saül</i> (1763)	<i>Charlot</i> (1767)
<i>Olympie</i> (1764)	<i>Le Dépositaire</i> (1769)
<i>Le Triumvirat</i> (1764)	
<i>Sophonisbe</i> (1774)	
<i>Irène</i> (1778)	
<i>Agathocle</i> (posth.) (1779)	

Clearly it was as a tragic, not as a comic, dramatist, that Voltaire caught the attention and attracted the sincerest flattery of the English. The three comedies adapted came late, were only partial imitations of his work, and formed only a fraction of the whole number of his lighter plays. The serious plays, on the other hand, coming on the stage from 1734 to 1776, were as a rule complete adaptations, comprised all of his most successful tragedies, and were a substantial part of his whole product in that field. The first seven (*Junius Brutus*, *Zara*, *Alzira*, *Mahomet*, *Merope*, *Roman Revenge*, and *The Orphan of China*) represented, in general, the work of practical dramatists, and included the most popular adaptations. Further, they indicated the alertness of the English theatrical world to what was going on in France, and its eagerness to borrow at once from that field. For, overlooking *Roman Revenge*, which had no stage career, each adaptation followed, with no great interval, the presentation of the original in Paris. *Brutus* came on the London stage four years

is here slightly expanded and amended, by the addition of *Matilda* (pp. 99-100), the placing of *Roman Revenge* among the plays actually presented (pp. 43-44), the omission of *Cyrus* (pp. 52-53), and the addition of *The Man of the World* (p. 113). These changes were listed by the author of the present study in an article in *Modern Language Notes* for April, 1917 (xxxii, 247).

after it had appeared in Paris, *Zara* three and a half years, *Alzira* a half year, *Mohomet* three years, *Mérope* six years, and *The Orphan of China* four years. If time spent in translation and alteration, in finding a producer, and in preparing the production, be reckoned, it seems that these adaptations followed close on the heels of their French originals.

The later tragedies, *Orestes*, *Almida*, *Zobcide*, *Alzuma*, *Matilda* and *Semiramis*, were in general the work of less practiced playwrights than the first, and none of them achieved as much stage success as came to the average play in the former group. Moreover, they did not represent the immediate transfer of Voltaire's latest successes to London. In the case of *Orestes* nineteen years intervened, of *Almida* eleven, of *Zobcide* four, of *Alzuma* twenty-two, of *Matilda* twenty-three, and of *Semiramis* twenty-eight. The attention now given to Voltaire's plays in England reflected more a literary interest in his past works than a rapid imitation of his most recent productions.

Yet it would be dangerous to conclude from these figures that the second quarter of the century marked the climax in English interest in Voltaire.⁴ To be sure, Professor Lounsbury⁵ analyzing the history of Voltaire's plays in England, describes the years from 1729 to 1744 as a period of active appreciation and adaptation, the year 1744 as bringing the turn of the tide, and the years from 1744 to Voltaire's death in 1778 as marked by a "sudden cessation of interest," in him. But the details of the stage history of Voltaire's plays in England do not support this analysis.

In the first period, from Voltaire's return from exile in 1729 to the publication of the Preface to *Mérope* in 1744, Professor Lounsbury holds that "English playwrights were disposed . . . to lay hands upon anything and everything Voltaire wrote for the theatre, without regard to the way it was received in the land of its birth." Yet in those years only *Brutus*, *Zaïre*, *Alzire*,

⁴ This subject has been discussed by the present writer in an article entitled "Period of Greatest Popularity of Voltaire's Plays on the English Stage," *Modern Language Notes*, January, 1918, xxxiii, 20-23.

⁵ *Shakespeare and Voltaire*, pp. 304ff.

and *Le Fanatisme* were presented in London. Meanwhile many of Voltaire's dramatic works—the tragedies *Eriphyle*, *Adélaïde du Guesclin*, *La Mort de César*, and *Zulime*; the comedies *Les Originaux*, *L'Échange*, and *L'Enfant Prodigue*; to say nothing of the earlier plays, *Oedipe*, *Artémire*, *Mariamne*, and *L'Indiscret*, did not appear in England.

Coming to the publication of the Preface to *Mérope* in 1744, Professor Lounsbury says that it marked the turn of the tide towards a "cessation of interest" in Voltaire, and that "the great success of that play upon the French stage did not lead to any speedy reproduction of it upon the English." It was not performed in London until 1749, yet its French success can not be said to have gone unnoticed in England, as John Theobald published a translation of it in 1744,⁶ and Aaron Hill completed his adaptation of it in 1745.⁷

Then comes the period from 1744 to Voltaire's death in 1778. In these years, says Professor Lounsbury, "Voltaire composed . . . about thirty dramatic pieces of all kinds. . . . But of these thirty only a beggarly number were adapted for the London stage. . . . He then lists seven adaptations.⁸ If to this list be added *Alzuma*, *Roman Revenge*,⁹ *Matilda*, and *The Man of the World*, the catalogue hardly makes up a "beggarly number" in comparison with the four adaptations played before 1744.

But more significant than the number of the adaptations was their fate in England. Of the seven adaptations after 1744 mentioned by him, Professor Lounsbury says that "with the exception of *The English Merchant*, none of these pieces had much success, none outlived their first season." Yet *The Orphan of China*, after its first presentation in April, 1759, appeared in London and the provinces at intervals until 1810,¹⁰ and *No One's*

⁶ *Biographia Dramatica*, III, 36.

⁷ Aaron Hill, *Works*, II, 307.

⁸ Adaptations of *Orphelin de la Chine*, *L'Écossaise*, *Tamérice*, *Les Scythes*, *Sémiramis*, *Oreste*, *L'Indiscret*.

⁹ Mentioned by Professor Lounsbury under the adaptations before 1744, though not played until 1753.

¹⁰ For details of stage history discussed in this paragraph, see appendix, pp. 140ff.

Enemy but His Own was revived, ten years after its first season, at Covent Garden in 1774. Meanwhile, and the point is far more important to the decision as to the period of greatest stage popularity for Voltaire in England, the earlier adaptations were best appreciated in later years. *Alzira* had a modest success between 1750 and 1760; and *Zara*, *Mahomet*, and *Merope*, in contrast to their presentation during one or two seasons before 1750, had each a prosperous career after that date. *Zara* was a stock piece for season after season; *Mahomet* kept the stage until 1797; and *Merope* until 1806. Then, too, *The English Merchant* was running at Drury Lane, Covent Garden and the Haymarket at intervals from 1767 to 1789. It seems, then, that the stage history of Voltaire's plays in England indicates not an active period of adaptation before 1744, turning to a "cessation of interest" thereafter, but rather a period of direct but narrow interest before 1744, growing, after that time, into a broad, perhaps scattering, but certainly vigorous popularity, which reached its climax in the third quarter of the century.

But behind dates, behind the traces of waning and waxing interest, there is always a sense of the exotic about Voltaire's plays in England. He formed no school; he established no tradition; he overthrew no custom; he made no creative appeal; he did not, like Shakespeare, sit at the elbow of those who came after him. Sometimes, perhaps, as in the case of Hill, an adapter had a vague idea, destined to fade into disillusionment, of propaganda, of uplift for the stage. More often, whether in the case of an upstart like Ayscough or a master like Garrick, the adapter saw in him merely a matter-of-fact opportunity, a chance of profit and notice for himself. In those lean years, when the harvest at home was so short, it was easy to find place in the field for foreign stock. It was not so easy to make it take root. If left to its own sap, it soon withered; if grafted to a native growth, it lived for a period, but died fruitless. Voltaire's plays in England, in other words, failures when untouched with the spirit of English literary tradition, successes only when revised in that spirit, were without issue in both cases. Though for long

a presence, he was not an influence on the English stage; English dramatic taste was not in any sense remolded by his plays. In thought the great radical, the ruthless exposé of hypoerisy, the lean-visaged challenger of orthodoxy, he was in drama the follower, the self-preening timid innovator, the hasty ungenerous creator of a world of unreality. In England it was elsewhere than in the drama that the mind behind those sharp eyes, that aquiline chin, those close-drawn lips, left its impress.

APPENDIX

PERFORMANCES OF ENGLISH ADAPTATIONS OF VOLTAIRE'S PLAYS¹

JUNIUS BRUTUS

Nov. 25, 1734. D. L.²

Acted seven or eight times.

Feb. 24, 1735. D. L.

ZARA

May 29, 1735. Great Room in York
Buildings, Villiers Street.Two other performances in June of
that year.

Jan. 12, 1736. D. L.

Uninterrupted run of fourteen nights.

March 16, 1751. C. G.

March 19, 1751. C. G.

May 3, 1751. C. G.

May 15, 1753. D. L.

Also six preceding times that season.

Jan. 20, 1753. C. G.

March 25, 1754. D. L.

April 24, 1754. D. L.

Oct. 30, 1755. C. G.

Nov. 1, 1755. C. G.

Nov. 3, 1755. C. G.

Dec. 15, 1755. C. G.

Dec. 18, 1755. C. G.

April 8, 1755. D. L.

May 9, 1755. D. L.

Feb. 10, 1756. D. L.

Jan. 27, 1757. D. L.

March 26, 1757. D. L.

May 31, 1757. D. L.

Two other performances that season—
five altogether.

Oct. 25, 1757. D. L.

April 22, 1758. D. L.

Nov. 8, 1758. D. L.

Dec. 20, 1758. D. L.

Jan. 11, 1759. C. G.

March 19, 1759. D. L.

May 2, 1759. D. L.

June 4, 1759. D. L.

Nov. 3, 1759. D. L.

Dec. 5, 1759. D. L.

Dec. 14, 1759. D. L.

March 27, 1760. D. L.

Oct. 8, 1760. D. L.

Dec. 12, 1760. C. G.

Feb. 5, 1761. D. L.

April 27, 1761. D. L.

Sept. 29, 1761. D. L.

Oct. 19, 1761. C. G.

Nov. 27, 1762. D. L.

Dec. 17, 1762. D. L.

Jan. 7, 1764. D. L.

Feb. 2, 1764. D. L.

Two other performances that season.

Feb. 6, 1765. D. L.

April 29, 1765. D. L.

Jan. 23, 1766. D. L.

Jan. 31, 1766. D. L.

April 19, 1766. D. L.

Oct. 18, 1766. D. L.

Nov. 11, 1767. D. L.

One other performance that season.

May 10, 1768. C. G.

Oct. 11, 1768. D. L.

Nov. 19, 1768. C. G.

Dec. 26, 1768. Southwark

Theatre, Philadelphia.

¹ These dates are collected from Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage*; Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre*, and from contemporary periodicals.

² In these tables the abbreviation D. L. stands for Drury Lane Theatre and C. G. for Covent Garden Theatre.

May 8, 1769. D. L.	Jan. 10, 1782. C. G.
Jan. 2, 1770. D. L.	April 16, 1782. Baltimore.
Nov. 28, 1770. D. L.	April 30, 1782. Baltimore.
Dec. 16, 1771. D. L.	Season, 1781-1782. Dublin.
One other performance that season.	Oct. 10, 1782. C. G.
Nov. 7, 1772. D. L.	Dec. 28, 1782. Baltimore.
One other performance that season.	Season, 1782-1783. Dublin.
May 13, 1774. D. L.	March 4, 1784. C. G.
One other performance that season.	Nov. 17, 1784. D. L.
Oct. 13, 1774. D. L.	Nov. 24, 1784. D. L.
Dec. 3, 1774. C. G.	Dec. 26, 1785. D. L.
March 7, 1775. D. L.	Aug. 17, 1786. Frederick.
One other performance that season.	Maryland.
1775. Faneuil Hall, Boston.	March 7, 1788. New York.
Oct. 12, 1775. C. G.	April 16, 1790. Southwark
Oct. 25, 1775. D. L.	Theatre, Philadelphia.
Dec. 14, 1775. D. L.	Oct. 7, 1791. C. G.
Feb. 3, 1776. D. L.	Nov. 18, 1791. John Street
March 7, 1776. D. L.	Theatre, New York.
Feb. 12, 1778. C. G.	Jan. 10, 1795. Charleston.
Dec. 12, 1778. Edinburgh.	Feb. 23, 1796. Philadelphia.
March 27, 1780. New York.	Aug. 6, 1796. Baltimore.
Oct. 21, 1780. New York Company	Dec. 19, 1796. C. G.
in Jamaica.	April 20, 1805. C. G.
Dec. 15, 1780. D. L.	Four more performances.
Jan. 2, 1781. New York.	May 27, 1805. C. G.
March 12, 1781. New York.	Jan. 6, 1806. C. G.
Oct. 10, 1781. D. L.	April 26, 1808. Bath.
Dec. 18, 1781. Bath.	Nov. 7, 1812. C. G.
Three other performances at Bath and	
Bristol that season.	

ALZIRA

June 18, 1736. Lincoln's Inn	April 30, 1744. D. L.
Fields.	March 18, 1755. C. G.
Acted nine times, the ninth being July	April 29, 1757. D. L.
21, 1736.	Jan. 11, 1758. C. G.
Oct. 14, 1736. Lincoln's Inn	Jan. 13, 1758. C. G.
Fields.	

MAHOMET THE IMPOSTOR

April 25, 1744. D. L.	Nov. 25, 1765. D. L.
Acted three times.	Acted seven or eight times.
Feb. 2, 1754. Smock Alley	Nov. 26, 1766. D. L.
Theatre, Dublin.	Dec. 8, 1767. C. G.
March 2, 1754. Smock Alley	May 4, 1768. C. G.
Theatre, Dublin.	Oct. 24, 1768. C. G.
One performance the next season	Feb. 1, 1772. C. G.
there.	June 5, 1772. Liverpool.

April 19, 1776. D. L.
 Nov. 11, 1778. D. L.
 Two more performances there.
 Dec. 14, 1778. D. L.
 Nov. 8, 1780. New York.
 Sept. 13, 1782. Baltimore.
 Oct. 1, 1782. Baltimore.
 Oct. 15, 1782. Baltimore.
 Nov. 4, 1783. Bath.
 April 4, 1786. C. G.

Dec. 4, 1786. C. G.
 Jan. 21, 1795. New York.
 April 27, 1795. D. L.
 Feb. 13, 1796. New York.
 Oct. 13, 1796. C. G.
 May 1, 1797. Boston.
 Season of 1807-1808. Bath.
 Season of 1811-1812. Birmingham.
 Nov. 30, 1813. Bath.
 April 8, 1817. Bath.

MEROPE

April 15, 1749. D. L.
 Acted eleven times.
 Feb. 9, 1750. D. L.
 Acted three times.
 April 10, 1753. D. L.
 April 17, 1754. D. L.
 Oct. 15, 1757. D. L.
 Feb. 3, 1759. D. L.
 Nov. 1, 1759. D. L.
 Dec. 5, 1760. D. L.
 July 19, 1762. Dublin.
 Jan. 6, 1766. D. L.
 April 19, 1770. D. L.
 Jan. 13, 1773. D. L.
 Jan. 18, 1773. D. L.

April 3, 1773. D. L.
 Nov. 25, 1773. D. L.
 Jan. 17, 1777. C. G.
 Jan. 18, 1777. C. G.
 Jan. 20, 1777. C. G.
 Jan. 22, 1777. D. L.
 Feb. 18, 1777. Bath.
 Dec. 19, 1778. D. L.
 Jan. 19, 1779. D. L.
 Jan. 15, 1787. C. G.
 Nov. 29, 1797. C. G.
 Feb. 22, 1806. C. G.
 March 1, 1806. D. L.
 Acted at Bath, season 1806-07.
 June 1, 1815. Bath.

ROMAN REVENGE

Summer, 1753. Bath.

ORPHAN OF CHINA

April 21, 1759. D. L.
 Acted nine times.
 Feb. 13, 1760. D. L.
 Feb. 16, 1760. D. L.
 Feb. 21, 1760. Smock Alley,
 Dublin.
 Jan. 5, 1761. Smock Alley,
 Dublin.
 Acted five times.
 Jan., 1761. Capel Street, Dublin.
 April 2, 1764. D. L.
 April 26, 1764. D. L.
 May 5, 1764. D. L.
 Nov. 24, 1764. D. L.
 March 5, 1765. D. L.

April 15, 1765. D. L.
 Oct. 25, 1765. D. L.
 Nov. 24, 1766. D. L.
 Jan. 16, 1767. Southwark
 Theatre, Philadelphia.
 Feb. 6, 1767. Southwark
 Theatre, Philadelphia.
 Nov. 19, 1767. D. L.
 1767-1768. Smock Alley, Dublin.
 May 9, 1768. John Street
 Theatre, New York.
 Feb. 16, 1770. Southwark
 Theatre, Philadelphia.
 Season, 1772-1773. Crow Street,
 Dublin.

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| Nov. 6, 1777. C. G. | Jan. 23, 1786. New York. |
| Nov. 17, 1777. C. G. | Feb. 12, 1788. York. |
| Another performance in Nov., 1777.
C. G. | March 16, 1789. Southwark
Theatre, Philadelphia. |
| May 18, 1779. Theatre Royal,
New York. | Feb. 7, 1791. Southwark Theatre,
Philadelphia. |
| Aug. 4, 1781. Jamaica. | Season, 1794-1795. D. L. |
| 1785. Private Theatre, Dover. | Feb. 13, 1810. Dublin. |

NO ONE'S ENEMY BUT HIS OWN

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| Jan. 9, 1764. C. G. | Oct. 26, 1774. C. G. |
| Jan. 19, 1764. C. G. | Jan. 19, 1778. Southwark Theatre,
Philadelphia. |
| Two other performances in Jan., 1764.
C. G. | May 19, 1797. New York. |

THE MAN OF THE WORLD

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Feb. 7, 1766. Crow Street,
Dublin. | March 31, 1808. C. G. |
| (Under title: <i>True-Born Scotch-
man</i> .) | June 3, 1808. C. G. |
| Feb. 14, 1766. Crow Street,
Dublin. | June 11, 1808. Bath. |
| Feb. 15, 1766. Crow Street,
Dublin. | Oct. 13, 1808. C. G. |
| Season, 1770-1771. Crow Street,
Dublin. | Acted ten times that season. |
| May 10, 1781. C. G. | Dec. 3, 1808. Bath. |
| First performance under title, <i>Man of
the World</i> . Acted five times, the
fifth being May 28, 1781. | Dec. 6, 1808. Bath. |
| Oct. 5, 1781. C. G. | Oct. 25, 1809. C. G. |
| Acted several times. | Acted twelve times that season. |
| Jan. 29, 1784. C. G. | Dec. 6, 1811. C. G. |
| Feb. 11, 1786. C. G. | Aug. 29, 1815. Haymarket
Theatre. |
| Oct. 26, 1788. C. G. | April 16, 1816. C. G. |
| Sept. 29, 1790. C. G. | July 1, 1816. Haymarket
Theatre. |
| May 16, 1797. C. G. | July 6, 1816. C. G. |
| April 10, 1802. C. G. | Dec. 27, 1816. C. G. |
| April 21, 1802. C. G. | March 18, 1822. D. L. |
| April 20, 1803. C. G. | Acted six times. |
| May 24, 1803. C. G. | Feb. 8, 1823. Bath. |
| Sept. 28, 1803. C. G. | Dec. 5, 1823. C. G. |
| Oct. 5, 1804. C. G. | Acted eleven times. |
| Oct. 18, 1805. C. G. | Feb. 20, 1824. Bath. |
| June 9, 1807. C. G. | July 3, 1824. D. L. |
| March 10, 1808. C. G. | Oct. 13, 1824. C. G. |
| | April 12, 1826. Bath. |
| | Jan. 5, 1828. C. G. |
| | Oct. 3, 1828. D. L. |
| | Nov. 27, 1851. Sadler's Wells. |

THE ENGLISH MERCHANT

Feb. 21, 1767. D. L. Acted fourteen times.	July 28, 1786. Haymarket Theatre.
Sept. 23, 1767. D. L.	Aug. 4, 1788. Haymarket Theatre.
Oct. 5, 1767. C. G.	Feb. 28, 1789. Bath.
Jan. 28, 1769. C. G.	March 31, 1789. Southwark Theatre, Philadelphia.
Nov. 15, 1769. C. G.	May 22, 1789. Haymarket Theatre.
Jan. 4, 1771. C. G.	Sept. 24, 1789. John Street Theatre, New York.
Nov. 21, 1771. C. G.	Dec. 9, 1789. John Street Theatre, New York.
April 6, 1774. Charleston.	March 10, 1790. Southwark Theatre, Philadelphia.
Dec. 2, 1775. Bath.	Jan. 31, 1791. Southwark Theatre, Philadelphia.
Aug. 28, 1776. Liverpool.	Feb. 20, 1795. Philadelphia.
Spring, 1777. York.	June 18, 1795. New York. Under title, <i>The Benevolent Merchant</i> .
May 15, 1777. Haymarket Theatre	July 31, 1795. Baltimore.
July 16, 1779. Haymarket Theatre.	Feb. 20, 1796. Philadelphia.
May 6, 1780. Jamaica.	Oct. 7, 1796. Baltimore.
July 18, 1781. Haymarket Theatre.	
June 15, 1782. Haymarket Theatre.	
June 2, 1784. Haymarket Theatre.	
Jan. 6, 1786. New York. Under title, <i>The Benevolent Merchant</i> .	

ORESTES

March 13, 1769. C. G.	Oct. 15, 1774. D. L. Under title, <i>Electra</i> . Acted three times.
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ALMIDA

Jan. 12, 1771. D. L. Acted eleven times.

ZOBELIDE

Dec. 11, 1771. C. G. Acted eleven times.

ALZUMA

Feb. 23, 1773. C. G. Acted nine times.

MATILDA

Jan. 29, 1775. D. L.	1776. Liverpool.
Acted eleven times, May 27, 1775, being the eleventh.	Spring, 1777. York.
Feb. 1, 1776. D. L.	Season, 1781-1782. Dublin.
April 15, 1776. D. L.	Season, 1782-1783. Dublin.
	March 7, 1785. C. G.

SEMIRAMIS

Dec. 13, 1776. D. L.	Jan. 16, 1777. Bath.
Acted eleven times.	Spring, 1777. York.

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 Another edition. Dublin, 1737
 Another edition. London, 1752
 Another edition. Edinburgh, 1755
 Second (?) edition. London, 1758
 Another edition. London, 1760
 Another edition. Dublin, 1762
 Second (?) edition. London, 1763
 Not like so-called second edition of 1758.
- Another edition. London, 1777
 Another edition. London, 1778
 Another edition. London, 1791
 Another edition. Dublin, 1791
 Another edition. London, 1803
 Another edition. London, 1805
 Another edition. London, 1807
 Another edition. London, 1808
 Another edition. Dublin, undated
- Five pages more than Dublin edition of 1737.
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